

DUFFER'S SHOAL: A STRATEGIC DREAM OF THE PACIFIC COMMAND AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

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ADVANCING
STRATEGIC THOUGHT
SERIES

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FOREWORD

There is much discussion throughout the U.S. national security and foreign policy communities about the complexities and challenges of the Indo-Asia-Pacific as our Nation increases its strategic focus on this important region. In fact, there is already an abundance of think-tank generated forecasts and strategic net assessments focusing on China's military modernization, its competitive territorial and power pursuits, and the strategies and technologies that will be necessary to counter its growing anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities. While China is the prominent player in the region, it is only one piece of a highly complex and dynamic strategic puzzle. There are a myriad of regional and global dynamics at play. These formidable forces—piracy, human trafficking, terrorism, natural disasters, territorial disputes, and a growing dissatisfaction with the current world order, among others—present distinct and often overlapping challenges to regional and global security and stability. Yet, they also provide unique opportunities for enhanced collaboration and understanding.

The following strategic assessment seeks to go beyond a traditional comparative analysis of the military, technological, political, cultural, and economic factors governing the relationships and capabilities of the Asia Pacific environment. To truly make sense of the intrinsic complexities unique to this region, the authors endeavor to broaden our view and rely on a tool often overlooked in government studies: imagination. Moreover, they aim to offer a strategic document that is readable, instructive, and provocative. Pulling from a well-referenced piece of military teaching, this as-

essment borrows a learning concept first employed in 1904 by Major General Sir Ernest Dunlop Swinton in *The Defence of Duffer's Drift*. Widely read today among our military's ground forces, this fictional story describes the plight of young Lieutenant Backsight Forethought as he commands a 50-man platoon tasked to hold a tactically critical piece of land called Duffer's Drift. The story unfolds in a series of six dreams, where the blunders of the unwitting lieutenant lead to disaster. As the dreams progress, he harnesses the lessons of each of his failures, and by applying these lessons, his platoon ultimately defends Duffer's Drift.

While Sir Ernest Dunlop Swinton's book was originally penned to instruct tactical concepts, the piece is a powerful primer for strategic and operational thinking. The successful defense of Duffer's Drift required the nuanced application of hard-earned knowledge; ignoring even one tactical lesson guaranteed certain defeat. Applying this narrative concept to a contemporary and strategic setting, the authors borrow a page from this tactical playbook, and offer a 21st century account of "Duffer's Shoal: A Strategic Dream of the Pacific Command (PACOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR)." Employing a series of fictional "dreams" that explore many of the competing forces and dynamics pertinent to the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, our 21st century protagonist will take us through six distinct misadventures to illustrate and consider key strategic level lessons and insights.

To account for the prevailing challenges and the complex nature of modern strategic conflict, the central character in our narrative is a colonel newly assigned to the Commander's Action Group (CAG), at U.S. PACOM. A recent U.S. Army War College gradu-

ate, Colonel Carlisle “Maestro” Prudence begins his fictional plight on his way to report to PACOM’s Headquarters at Camp Smith, Hawaii. Fatigued by the last few days of household goods pack-out and garrison out-processing, he succumbs to slumber as his plane’s doors are secured for departure. Anxious to begin his new assignment, Colonel Prudence’s dreams instinctively race through the diverse strategic and operational level planning efforts he could be tasked with for supporting such a vast and vital region. Beginning with his first dream about steady state planning and continuing through escalating levels of conflict intensity, Colonel Prudence’s “success” will require the judicious application of the strategic lessons he has learned—and will yet learn. Similar to Lieutenant Foresight’s tactical progression, Colonel Prudence’s ultimate strategic “success” will hinge on his ability to appreciate and leverage all of the instruments of national power, recognizing and anticipating both desired and undesired consequences, and perhaps most importantly—having the strategic patience to understand and appreciate the region’s complex and dynamic environment.

While the structure of this analysis is inspired by Sir Ernest Dunlop Swinton’s work, the tactical defense of a drift is infinitely less complex than the strategic environment of the PACOM AOR. Thus, Colonel Prudence’s dreams are strategically diverse, and by necessity, more imaginative. By crafting these hypothetical narratives—by harnessing the power of the story—the authors seek to advance a deeper appreciation of the complexities in the region and illustrate the convergence of these complexities with our own national interests. Significantly, these six U.S. Army War College scholars hope to incite a richer dialogue

about our Nation's strategic approach to this vital region and challenge our definitions of strategic success. By sharing these pragmatic stories, they endeavor to inspire a better way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas C. Lovelace, Jr."

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.
Director
Strategic Studies Institute and
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Source: USPACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) available from www.dmzhawaii.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/AOR_map700x446.jpg, accessed December 20, 2014.

Map 1. PACOM AOR.

DUFFER'S SHOAL: A STRATEGIC DREAM OF THE PACIFIC COMMAND AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY

FIRST DREAM

An Early Appreciation.

Weary from the preceding days of out-processing and hectic pack out from Carlisle Barracks, I surrendered to a deep sleep as soon as the plane's doors were secured for departure. The soft whine of the aircraft's engines was like a gentle lullaby, beckoning me to a long slumber.

Suddenly, I found myself seated at a large rectangular conference table, encircled by the familiar black, high-backed rolling chairs ubiquitous to U.S. military conference rooms around the globe. I silently wondered if these widely distributed U.S. Government furniture staples had been produced in Chinese factories. A quick survey of the Pacific Command (PACOM)-logoed coffee cup clutched in my right hand confirmed the anticipated "Made In China" stamping.



Picture 1. "Made in China."

My thoughts abruptly returned to the task at hand, as the PACOM Commander entered the room. After re-taking my seat, I began to brief the Commander on the initial operational design we recently produced within the Command Action Group (CAG) here at Camp Smith, Hawaii. Our focus was on PACOM's Area of Responsibility (AOR) and U.S. national interests in the region. This morning's out-brief marked the culmination of 3 weeks of dedicated design and (optimistically) the transition from the Iraq/ Afghanistan focus of the previous decade to the more conventional planning process inherent to our steady state military operations, exercises, and security cooperation assistance programs throughout the Indo-Asia-Pacific region.

As I progressed through my well-rehearsed Power-Point slides, I outlined key findings of our design work and highlighted the shared logic that shaped our emerging viewpoints. At its core, our framing of the PACOM AOR had revealed a very complex geopolitical system with numerous internal and external dynamics and actors at play. The primary drivers of this system appeared to be the ongoing strategic competition between the United States and China, and the continued bifurcation of regional and global actors between the two national powers. Notably, our group had deduced that respective nation-states and actors in the Indo-Asia-Pacific "system" would predictably dance between both camps, seemingly siding with a respective power when it benefited their individual interests. The United States typically emerged as the desired partner when it came to security interests; China was the preferred choice when the stakes were financial. The dynamic interplay of these changing alliances and partnerships could be likened to a basic weighing scale, with the balance of power shifting by issue and interest. Conspicuously,

the scale of influence had tipped decidedly in China's favor in recent years.

I paused to take a sip of my coffee, allowing the Commander an opportunity to provide feedback. She seemed intrigued by our initial understanding of the environment. After a brief moment, the Commander inquired about the current U.S. strategic approach to the region, and the impact our recent policy pivot was having on this delicate competitive balance. The Commander wondered aloud if this strategic orientation came with undesired consequences, and if this approach furthered a detrimental, Cold War-like power struggle in the region. Did our current national strategy mistakenly advance a zero sum game with China? What was the optimal U.S. approach?

Before I could respond, my CAG colleague jumped in with a passionate reply. These very questions had dominated a good portion of our group discussion throughout the design, and represented our chief takeaways from 3 weeks of effort. As my colleague relayed, our review had suggested that the pursuit of equal influence—or worse, yet—a balance decidedly favored toward the United States was, in fact, undesirable. Such pursuits by the United States would inevitably provoke a counterbalance by China, leading to greater instability and bifurcation in the region. China's predictable response to the U.S. provocative pursuit of exclusionary trade agreements, like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and development of the U.S. military's Air-Sea Battle are cases in point. In short, the competitive balance being played out between the United States and China did not lend itself well to Cold War thinking.

“What about multilateral organizations, like the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation [APEC]?” asked the Commander. “Is it possible for the United States to more effectively engage with China and our regional partners through these forums? What about the progress recently made at the November 2014 APEC Summit?”¹

These were particularly vexing questions to answer. From our review, it was apparent that China preferred interacting with regional nations on a bilateral, one-on-one basis. We surmised that this preference stemmed from China’s ability to control more effectively such engagements. If China meaningfully participated in multilateral settings, it was typically in alliances that China itself had spearheaded and in which the United States was not a member. China’s aggressive promotion of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (the BRICS countries) collaboration and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) were examples of two such multilateral partnerships aimed at challenging U.S. global leadership.²

Further, we determined that China’s underlying distrust of the existing international order—and its belief that the current order unfairly favors the United States—would make China’s substantive participation in any organizations advanced by the United States unlikely. This would particularly be the case as long as China perceived the United States as a deliberate competitor, directly challenging its national interests. At best, the United States could try to incentivize China to play by existing international norms and rules, and attempt to make the costs of not playing by the rules undesirable. This optimal course of action would only be attainable if existing organizations were modified to acknowledge and account for China’s interests.

The Commander reflected on our assessment, and then questioned the impact of China's recent overtures to Russia. "Despite a history of rivalry," the Commander explained, "the last few years have seen a marked improvement in Russian-Chinese relations, culminating in the historic 30-year, \$456 billion energy deal reached between the two nations in May 2014.³ How would you characterize the current relationship between these two powers, and what is the potential impact of this emerging strategic partnership on U.S. interests? What leverage does the United States have with China, given the continued development and influence of these alternate alliances and organizations?"

I felt my cheeks turning pink. Naively, we had assumed Russia was principally a European Command (EUCOM), vice PACOM, concern. Sheepishly admitting our error to the Commander, I confessed: "Ma'am, we did not consider China's bilateral relationship with Russia in our assessment. We will go back to the white board and reframe our understanding." Silence. I hated uncomfortable silence in a briefing with the Commander. After a curt nod, the Commander proceeded by asking our assessment of the September 2014 agreement by SCO members to increase their membership by four nations. Momentously, China, Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan had agreed to add India, Pakistan, Iran, and Mongolia to their group.⁴ Did these SCO additions signal an expansion of the organization's focus? Moreover, with inclusion of these formidable nations, was the SCO emerging as a viable regional security and economic counterweight?⁵

My colleague hastily handed me an article from yesterday's news clips. Quickly skimming the highlighted portions, my eyes jumped to recent remarks

attributed to Russian professor Aleksey Maslov, chair of the Department of Asian Studies at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. “At present,” Maslov surmised, “the SCO has started to counterbalance NATO’s role in Asia.”⁶ The article proceeded with an account of how “the aggressive nature of Western actions towards Russia has certainly united the SCO members,” and that “[t]he SCO, like the BRICS with their Development Bank, sees itself as a forum against the Western dominated global order.”⁷

Trying to summarize expeditiously the article’s key insights, I attributed the recent SCO expansion to China’s larger pursuit of global influence and the creation of an alternate world order. Internally, I also wondered about the broader implications of these growing alliances and the criticality of our adding a robust understanding of Russia—and China’s pursuit globally—into our strategic thinking. Could U.S. and European attempts to isolate Russia, through economic sanctions and diplomatic rebukes, ultimately push Russia closer toward China? Would such an outcome prove more perilous in the long run than Russia’s bellicose actions in Eastern Europe? Specifically, would a growing China-Russia partnership lead to the sale of more advanced Russian weaponry to Chinese forces? Equally troubling, what would the addition of a country like Iran to the SCO partnership mean to our efforts in the Middle East? The dangers of overlooking and misunderstanding the complex factors and relationships at play were undeniably profound.

After receiving the signal from the Chief of Staff to wrap up my brief, I promptly advanced to my final slide and awkwardly asked the Commander if she had any remaining questions or concerns. After another pause, the Commander looked around the room and asked me to list the specific participants of our de-

sign effort. I dutifully named each and every member of our team, breathing a sigh of relief for a seemingly simple inquiry.

The Commander's follow-up question caught me completely by surprise. With audible frustration in her voice, she asked what interagency and international partners we included in our design. I stumbled to come up with a suitable response. Certainly, the Commander understood that we only had access to PACOM staff for this design effort, and the limited number of interagency civilians assigned to the headquarters precluded their meaningful participation. The inclusion of any international representation would have proven further futile, given geographic realities, funding constraints, and security clearance concerns. Even the 45-minute video teleconference we had conducted with the U.S. State Department desk officers back at Foggy Bottom had proven to be a logistical nightmare due to time differences and incompatible agency network links.

As I searched for reasonable justifications, it struck me that our understanding was perilously incomplete without having the right expertise in the room. Similar to the mistaken exclusion of Russia as a key external actor in our regional assessment, our analysis lacked critical civilian and global perspective. Perspectives that would arguably have enabled a more complete understanding of the complex adaptive system that is the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. A renewed look at our polished slides quickly reinforced that our efforts were understandably biased toward a U.S. military, and specifically PACOM, viewpoint.

I closed my eyes, briefly, wishing a do-over with the Commander. Many of the valuable insights our CAG had advanced were obscured by our avoidable stumbles. Replaying the lessons learned, I

prioritized the following strategic takeaways for follow on planning.

Reflections.

1. Apply systemic thinking to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the environment. This can help identify potential consequences of our action (or inaction) and is vital for both steady state and contingency planning.

2. Collaborate early and often with interagency, international, and nongovernmental partners, particularly when seeking to understand and engage in a complex, adaptive environment like the PACOM AOR. While the costs and hurdles of securing such cooperation may be challenging, the price of incomplete and erroneous understandings is far greater.

3. Pursue complementary solutions. Zero sum, competitive approaches to U.S. foreign policy in the PACOM AOR have unintended and perilous consequences, both within the region and worldwide. Such approaches often educe undesirable military escalation and bring about unproductive competition in the region.

SECOND DREAM

Of Fish and Pirates.

At once, I noticed a change around me. The distinct smell of the sea and the sound of the tide lapping slowly against wood jerked me back into consciousness. As I surveyed the area, I was not sure exactly where I stood, but I did realize I was standing on an old wooden dock. The smell of rotting wood and dead fish quickly overcame the fragrance of the salt air. As I struggled to gain

my bearings, I began to look at the markings of the boats in the harbor, and listened to the locals speaking to each other as they conducted their routine business. After a few minutes, I concluded that I stood on the dock of Hai Phong Harbor in Vietnam.

The workday seemed to be ending as I watched fishing boats return to the harbor with conspicuously empty nets. The captains and crews were noticeably disheartened as they unloaded their gear, pointing at the nets, heads bowed in disappointment, while speaking to each other in hushed tones. I thought back to my understanding of the importance of fishing in this part of the world, and immediately realized the predicament around me.



Picture by Lucas Jans.

Picture 2. Vietnamese Fishing Boat.

Overfishing, the exploitation of the fishing areas by industrial fishing companies, and decades of dynamite and cyanide fishing practices by countries in the region finally took the predicted toll on the maricul-

ture industry.⁸ With the destruction of so many of the coral reefs and the over-exploitation of the viable fishing areas, the fishing industry in the South China Sea (SCS) ceased to be economically sustainable. With the fish previously available annually to local fishermen decimated and surviving schools migrating to new areas with abundant coral reefs, an economic collapse became imminent. Even in the disputed waters, China had pursued aggressive fishing for many years, leaving nothing in the area untouched. This loss of income and food source for the countries in the area took a heavy toll, leaving fishermen without an income to provide for their families.⁹

I sought out my local colleague, eager to gain a more thorough understanding of the problem and possible backlash. Duong Pham requested I return to our hotel while he spoke to the local fisherman. My presence would surely prevent them from telling the whole story. I returned to my lodging and awaited Duong's report.

When he showed up at the hotel, his face betrayed the desperation of the situation. He wove a story, increasingly despondent, about the plight of the fishermen in the SCS. The men we saw returning to the harbor earlier were but a few that still had faith they could earn an honorable living. Most, Duong explained, had turned to a life of crime to provide for their families. Needing expertise on the waters, criminal organizations offered any fisherman an opportunity to join them for a reasonable sum. These recruits became pirates through the Strait of Malacca and the SCS. The older ones became thieves within the ports, stealing equipment and anything of value from the anchored boats. The younger ones trained to become hijackers. They not only took over boats as teams for ransom from

large companies or countries, but they also learned to remove identification marks on the boat to create phantom ships. Duong continued the back brief as he explained how these actions raised insurance rates, began restricting free trade, and increased already high tensions between littoral states, their neighbors and the countries whose flagged ships were attacked or hijacked.¹⁰

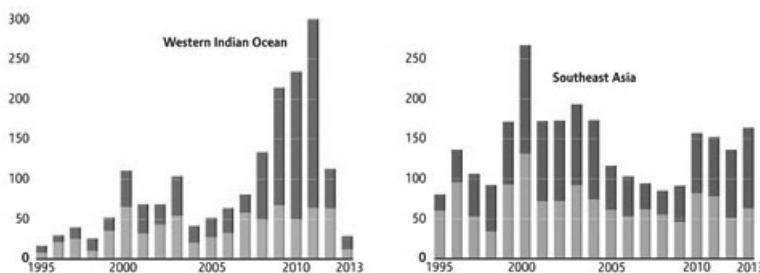


Figure 1. Acts of Piracy and Armed Robbery in SCS (1995-2013).¹¹

Duong sat back and asked for a moment before continuing. I could see the anxiety in his face as he prepared to finish telling me the situation. He sighed as he relayed the increasing popularity of human trafficking as a secondary effect of this economic loss. Piracy and the creation of phantom ships provided more opportunities for transnational criminal organizations (TCO) to move human cargo freely through the Strait of Malacca and the SCS. The increase in activity was dynamic in countries already heavily involved in these practices.¹² The unending poverty started an avalanche of individuals willing to find and sell women and children to traffickers to provide for the most basic needs. Due to the over-

whelming increased supply of human capital, TCOs paid next to nothing for the victims, while their customers, brothel keepers, business owners, home owners, insurgents, would-be parents, and sellers on the medical black market, now heavily vested in human trafficking, made enormous profits, further increasing demands.¹³ Once again, the use of phantom ships became prevalent in order to move the increasing number of slaves, skyrocketing current conditions to crisis. Countries in the region, frantic to keep the populace from uprising due to economic distress, no longer adhered to anti-piracy or human trafficking regulations.¹⁴

I took a deep breath and tried to comprehend all of the complexities of this situation across the whole region. Recalling the number of errors outlined by the PACOM commander in the briefing, I was determined not to make the same critical mistakes in my assessment of this situation. I pulled out my laptop to review my previous mishaps. The first thing I considered was whether I had a good understanding of the situation. Duong provided me information from the sources at ground zero, thus I felt I knew everything I needed to begin planning.

I navigated to the Joint Interagency Center for Strategic Lessons Learned (JICSL) webpage to see if there was any information pertinent to the situation.¹⁵ After about 2 hours of clicking broken links, I finally found information on piracy. Opening the report, I realized it was all information on handling piracy in the Gulf of Aden. I bookmarked the report. Efforts in that area of operations had shown success, so I was confident that the United States could use the Gulf of Aden operations as templates for this situation. At least there was a model for me to refer to, and there was no time to reinvent the wheel.



Photo by U.S. Navy.

Picture 3. U.S. Forces Arresting Suspected Pirates.

Remembering the need for interagency coordination and planning, I attempted to contact the State Department liaison to discuss previous and ongoing anti-piracy efforts and any political considerations or sensitivities to U.S. intervention. I also sent emails and left messages for the military attaches within the affected countries to ensure we discussed, in a multi-national forum, the issues with territorial waters and incidents crossing those lines. I left word at the embassies in Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, and the Philippines to set up conference calls about our territorial questions. Issues with secure communications and the time differences prevented our interaction with the State Department and the attaches. I resolved to continue my analysis without their input, noting the attempt at collaboration.

After a few hours of poring over the issues, the articles downloaded from the JICSL, and some hasty

planning, I arrived at a plan of operation for the region's current problems. Duong and I reviewed the plan and agreed it was an aggressive course of action ready for immediate implementation.

- Aggressive patrols throughout the Strait of Malacca and SCS to deter or defeat pirates before they board vessels.
- Immediate turnover of all captured pirates by partners or affected countries to the International Criminal Court for prosecution.¹⁶
- Searches conducted on all vessels to look for contraband or slave movement.
- Increased presence in areas known to be involved with human trafficking to provide local officials with actionable information.

I smiled to myself, proud of the decisions and quick planning I was able to complete. I forwarded the plan to higher headquarters, and, since I was the subject matter expert on the ground, actions on my directives were immediate. Orders given and execution underway, I returned to my lodging to await progress updates. The plan delivered immediate noticeable results. The increased maritime patrols, searches, and aggressive pursuit produced a surge in the capture of pirates now facing adjudication by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Patrols interdicted multiple phantom ships transporting trafficking victims to new locations. Traffickers noticed PACOM personnel in their establishments, and local authorities noted reports on these businesses. I took 30 days of leave, and upon my return, met with Duong, anticipating great success stories and a phone call from the boss lauding my accomplishments.

Duong told me to sit down and ordered us both a drink, which was unusual for him, but I took a long sip of the cool beverage and anxiously awaited his

report. Instead of praise, the information I received was unexpected, lapsing me into silence and deep thought. Although initial estimates flaunted great success in decreasing both piracy and trafficking incidents, Duong's informants and research revealed higher incidents of both, as well as new issues throughout the area of operations. The rapid capture and removal of pirates left a greater number of families lacking their primary provider; economic stress in the region increased. There were more women and children homeless, without food, and unable to sustain themselves. The great rise in such poverty began riots and uprisings in the cities. Citizens quickly lost confidence in their government's ability to provide, and anti-U.S. sentiments rose. The lack of food and shelter overwhelmed the abilities of underfunded and immature social programs leading to the desperate undertaking of low-level crime by displaced families.

Although patrols interdicted phantom ships with thousands of human slaves, the lower supply across the network increased both demand and cost for new slaves. TCOs noticed the presence of our personnel in trafficking establishments and began preying on those lacking proper training or unfamiliar with routine human trafficking practices. Promises of dances, "fun nights," and cold drinks created an additional increase in demand for slaves in the dance clubs and brothels as personnel unwittingly involved themselves in trafficking as customers. Although we forwarded reports on such establishments, the owners had the majority of the authorities on their payroll. The reports from our personnel to the authorities caused backlash within the clubs. Owners lashed out at their workers for talking to U.S. personnel about their "contracts" and incidents of severe violence increased.

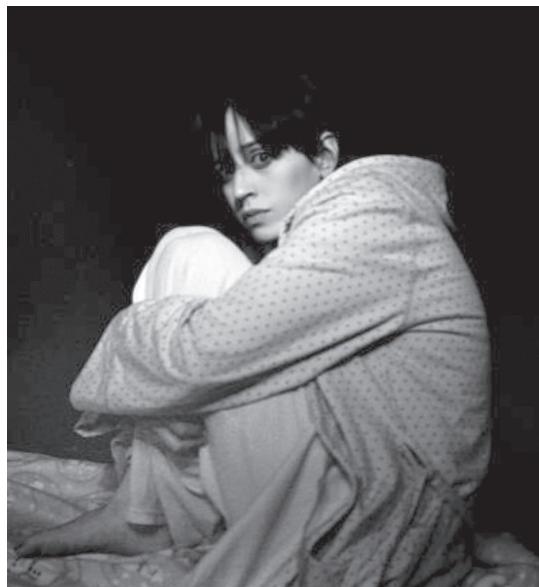


Photo by Alyssa L. Miller.

Picture 4. Sex Trafficking Victim.

I dropped my head into my hands and could hear the Commander's voice in my head, ticking off the problems with my plan. "As you can see, Maestro, your plan was incomplete. There are key considerations missing which resulted in these second order effects and further destabilization." My shoulders slumped as I imagined her ticking off some of the most important strategic lessons we learned at the U.S. Army War College. What was I thinking? These were rookie mistakes. I raised my head, looked at Duong, and we spoke at length about our next steps. We hoped to somehow reverse the additional damage my first plan caused. I annotated the previous observations, added the new considerations and my second planning session began.

Reflections.

1. Develop means and methods that enhance collaboration with interagency and international organizations. Failing to include partners in the planning process makes it extremely difficult to include them in the execution. Methods must look at problems holistically: A purely tactical or “ground zero” viewpoint limits thinking and does not incorporate operational or strategic considerations.
2. Find relevant examples to learn from. Strategic lessons from past operations are valuable, but we must understand the differences in the new context. One size does not fit all.
3. Conduct in-depth wargaming. A robust strategic wargame can reveal predictable unintended consequences—such as the impact of our actions on poverty and crime. Knowing this could allow us to develop mitigating strategies.
4. Do everything possible to understand the whole system before acting. Our injection into existing international systems without knowing how they operated was disruptive and caused unintended consequences. Personnel not understanding the human trafficking problem became consumers, while our misunderstanding of the authorities’ relationship with traffickers led to worsening human security conditions.

THIRD DREAM

The Specter of Terrorism.

I opened my eyes and found myself sitting alone in a darkened movie theater. I heard the familiar rattle and click of a film projector, as images began to flash on the screen. A solemn voiceover with a thick Indonesian accent began speaking.

The war against heretics and infidels continues. It has inspired martyrs from all over the world. They have fought in Syria and Iraq to build the Islamic caliphate and terrorize unbelievers and apostates into submission. As more brothers replace them, the veterans progressively return to their homes to light the world ablaze with jihad.¹⁷ Soon caliphs will rule the world. Soon the heretic Shias will be expunged. Soon the hated infidels will be put to flight.

The screen was filled with the face of a young soldier from Jamaah Ansharusy Syariah (JAS). His name was Yuda, and it was his voice that narrated the scene. The screen faded and cut to Yuda crouched in a shadowed doorway, while the throng of Jakarta's street bustled by. His heart thumping, the minutes ticked on. Then it was time. He sent the cellphone signal. Almost immediately, there were flames, a shock wave, and an ear-shattering eruption as the world was freed of the Shia blasphemies from the Islamic Cultural Center. Exultant, Yuda melted into the now-panicked crowd and disappeared. As instructed, he had dealt a blow to the heart of Jakarta's Shia population; it was the start of a more pure jihad. Across Indonesia, other brothers would be attacking the corrupt Polri (police)¹⁸ and Western companies that were raping the Indone-

sian resources. It might take many martyrs but it was inevitable: Indonesia would be a Sunni State under shari'a law.¹⁹



Photo by Zoriah.

Picture 5. JAS Terrorist.

In August 2014, JAS broke away from Abu Bakar Ba'asyir's Jemaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) when Abu Bakar declared allegiance to *Daish*, the Islamic State.²⁰ Abu Bakar was the longtime ideological leader of JAT and prior to that, of Jemaah Islamiya (JI).²¹ Yuda, like many previous JAT fighters, was a Syrian combat veteran with the al-Qaeda linked Jabhat al-Nusra (JN).²² He had gone to Syria to learn the ways of jihad and to bring new knowledge home. But when Abu Bakar declared allegiance to the Islamic State, it was clear that

JAT had lost its way. Yuda thought the Islamic State were narcissists, always taking films of themselves.²³ They committed atrocities against Sunni Muslims and even fought al-Nusra; such was their lust for power. As Yuda slipped deeper into the city, he knew it was imperative to act with strength now, so those who had sworn allegiance to the Islamic State would not have a chance to usurp the righteous Indonesian jihadis.²⁴

A smile curled on Yuda's lips. JAS would prove themselves more powerful and more pure than JI or JAT! They had learned many lessons and made many comrades from all over the world, including some Australian brothers who had now joined them to fight for Indonesia. It was these things that would be the seeds of victory. JAS would exploit corrupt officials and the weakness of the apostates, heretics, and infidels. It would build a shadow economy to fund its war, based on piracy, protection taxes, and trafficking Shia and Christian women and children to the fleshpots of Bangkok. They would train male children for jihad in jungle schools, and they would strike the symbols of Western imperialism. Perhaps most importantly, they had learned to coordinate their effects using social media,²⁵ cyberattack,²⁶ and martyrdom. They had even learned from the Free Aceh Movement²⁷ and the Arabs from the Islamic State how to build a shadow state. They had learned from Ansar al-Sharia in Libya (ASL) how to build a social movement that converted and cared for its followers.²⁸ Using these tactics, they would force the secular Government of Indonesia to declare itself a Sunni State under shari'a law. Today was the glorious beginning.

As I watched the images unfold on the screen and heard Yuda's thoughts, I realized I had a rare glimpse into the mind of my adversary. Abruptly, the theater

darkened, and the scene shifted. Now I found myself in the PACOM operations center and a “flash” signal had just arrived from the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia. The Shia Islamic Center had been bombed, and at least 200 people had been killed and wounded. As I was digesting this, there was a call over satellite phone saying that the Jakarta cellphone network had crashed under the combined weight of a cyberattack that had degraded services, just as there was a spike in demand following the bombing. Then came another report. This time one of Chevron’s offshore oil platforms in East Kalimantan’s Kutei Basin had been captured. Chevron Pacific Indonesia was the largest producer of crude oil in Indonesia and a major contributor to the Indonesian economy.

This was going to be a major disruption. It also showed that the perpetrators had some form of maritime capacity. I took a deep breath and remembered Yuda’s thoughts. I knew that, although these events were both tragic and dramatic, they were only the opening salvos in a new campaign of terror. Clearly, we needed a strong response. The first thing to do would be to send the special operations boys from Joint Task Force 510 (JTF-510) to assess the situation and take back our oil platform.²⁹ I congratulated myself on being a step ahead. Just then the Commander walked in. “Maestro,” she boomed. “The Indonesian Government is dealing with this one, but I want to know that our people are safe, and then I want to know how PACOM can support a smart approach.” With belated clarity, I realized that I had focused too quickly on the military element of power and not considered the full range of national and international options. In fact, an overtly military response might be counterproductive.

What else had I learned from Yuda? As the operations center hummed and buzzed around me, I tried to make coherent sense of his thoughts. The terrorists were trying to ignite underlying sectarian tensions between the majority Sunnis and the minority Shia and Christian populations. They must have a safe base or bases in the jungle. He was from JAS, which had links to the Island of Sulawesi, an outlying Island within easy travelling distance to Malaysia and the Philippines. I also knew that there were Australian and Arabic jihadi links, so it was clear that this had an international dimension. JAS had a social movement to provide *dawah* (outreach) and possibly a political element. Therefore, this was not just a straight fight, it would demand, as the Admiral said, a smart approach.

With deeper consideration, I realized we needed to start with the ends in mind and tailor PACOM's response to address both the short- and long-term issues. We needed to focus on the transnational aspects of the growing terror threat in South East Asia and undermine the sometime fractious links between the mosaic of militias that run between the Middle East and the Pacific. We required cross-jurisdictional efforts and, potentially, an interagency task force to protect borders, trade, and maritime assets. All of this had to be nuanced carefully with respect to the sovereignty of the nations and international organizations concerned. Ultimately, our enemy was terrorism rather than individual terrorist groups.³⁰ To win, we must take a comprehensive approach to mitigate the international drivers and enablers of terrorism: including extremism and abuse, poor education, shadow economies, and corruption, as well as weak and illegitimate governance.

We should promote the rule of law and thereby increase normalcy as a means to reduce extremism. At the national level, our efforts should strengthen our security partners, rather than trying to solve their problems our way. We needed to provide a more compelling and transparent future than the austere and dogmatic one offered by the extremists.

As I walked into the Commander's office to brief her on my analysis, she handed me a photo. I was shocked to see Yuda's face. He was a ringleader, and his details had just been transmitted to Special Detachment 88, the Indonesian counterterrorist police, courtesy of the Turkish Security Directorate. Globalization works both for and against the terrorists, I thought. While looking at the photo, I stole a moment to gather my thoughts.



Photo by Sam 193746.

Picture 6. Indonesian Security Forces.

Reflections.

1. Develop strategies that focus on terrorism first, not terrorists. Strategies focused exclusively on countering terrorists rarely achieve long-term success.
2. Counter the terrorists' use of the global system. Transnational terrorists are enabled by globalization as much as they violently reject it. Efforts to reduce terrorist freedom of action (funding, movement, reinforcement, and resupply), divide rival factions and unite moderates, and deter retention and recruitment.
3. Employ a smart approach that applies multi-partner efforts. Combining both soft and hard power together achieves more comprehensive results. In a globalized world, "civil-military cooperation" needs to increasingly replace "joint operations" as the byword for teamwork.
4. Redefine success to mean stability or nonviolent change. Since World War II, nonstate and intrastate conflict has become the most prevalent form of armed conflict. In this context, civil stability rather than military victory is the definition of success. Therefore, militaries need to reconsider their doctrines of decisive battle and the now trite cliché of "hearts and minds" to focus on building confidence in civil governance. In this context, the military will often be the essential enabler. Militaries should craft their efforts to reinforce legitimacy and build normalcy.

FOURTH DREAM

Dhaka's Despair.

Standing on the second floor of an old office building, I looked around at the wreckage. The ceiling tiles were stained with water damage, and the fluorescent

lights flickered randomly. Through the thin-pained windows, I heard the sounds of dense city traffic and a bustling city. Suddenly a deep rumble echoed through the building. The floor beneath my feet began to shake violently with an aftershock, and windows shattered and walls cracked. I could barely maintain my balance as I frantically tried to escape the building before it collapsed.

It was nearing 3 a.m. in Dhaka, Bangladesh, when the earthquake struck. They so often seem to come in the middle of the night. The Bangladeshis must have known it was coming – they had predicted that a magnitude 8 earthquake would occur soon as this seemed to be a centennial event around the three fault lines running under Dhaka. The locals expect a big earthquake every 80 years or so, and it had been over 120 years since the last one. They were overdue.

The office building I had been visiting belonged to the city's engineer—at least it did before it collapsed. Thankfully, he was not inside when it fell. So many buildings were damaged beyond repair during the earthquake, and the loss of life was horrific. A combination of poor building material and widespread violations of building codes and basic engineering principles led to a level of destruction none of the official estimates predicted. It is hard to say how many buildings were destroyed, but it was obvious that it was far more than the 70,000 we thought it would be. Unregulated growth over the past decade made it impossible to know how many buildings were standing before the earthquake, or how many people might actually have been in the city.

The destruction of the buildings was only part of the problem. The bigger problems were the fires from the unmapped gas lines that crisscross the city. That

was why we were visiting the engineer's office: hoping that maybe he had some insight as to how to turn off the flow of natural gas. Nobody seemed to know where the central switches to the gas lines might be, if they existed at all.³¹

The Fire Service and Civil Defense (FSCD) had not been able to coordinate much more than local responses: Their buildings were among the first to collapse, and very few response vehicles were still in operation. Even if they were operational, few people knew how to operate the equipment. The shiny new fire trucks donated by friendly nations (like the United States and China) were showpieces and not used for training or operations. Barring these challenges, the streets were largely nontrafficable for anything larger than a rickshaw. Help from neighboring firehouses was not forthcoming: With the landlines and cell towers down, there was no way to contact the other stations to see what condition they were in or to coordinate a larger response effort.

Local survivors scrambled over piles of rubble, risking their lives to find survivors in the wreckage. Reminiscent of the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster, untrained locals climbed into the tight spaces looking for their families and friends, often creating new problems as they added weight to already precarious structures. You could not blame them for wanting to help, but a little training or supervision might have prevented more loss of life. I wondered why this was not covered in our last few exercises. Earthquakes were the focus of our partnership emergency response program, but we somehow missed a few key items.



Photo by Demotix.

Picture 7. Rana Plaza, 2013.

Thankfully, Bangladeshi Army units were not in the parts of Dhaka most affected by the earthquake. The Army was the most professional and competent organization in Bangladesh, and this time it did not wait for official orders before responding.³² Soldiers quickly began opening key routes for aid to arrive. Their first priority was clearing Chittagong Highway, which connected the city to the country's only port. This would prove to be the vital lifeline for the city.

Relief supplies coming from the Regional Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance – part of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) – were to come from warehouses in Dubai, but had to be transloaded in Singapore, because the ships coming out of Dubai were too large for Bangladesh's shallow port, and even military over-the-shore logistics capabilities were not as useful as we thought they would be.



Photo by Bob Dixon.

Picture 8. Dhaka's River Port Only Handles Shallow Barges.

The biggest shortfall in local response was in medical and search and rescue. We simply did not have enough responders to go around, and the assets that were arriving from all the different nations were poorly coordinated. We would have set up more field hospitals closer to the city center, but there was no room anywhere in the city for them: All the green space in the city was used up by makeshift slums and unauthorized construction. We had to set up outside the city, but there was no way for people to get to us. Emergency vehicles could not get through the city quickly even before the earthquake—it was impossible now. Surely, we could have planned for this.

How could the devastation be so much worse than we anticipated? Why were we so unprepared to help? Why was the response so slow as thousands of re-

sponders sat waiting to help? In my mind, I reviewed our prior planning. We based many of our plans on the U.S. response in Haiti.³³ We rehearsed earthquake response with the Bangladeshis at the last two disaster response exercise and exchanges.³⁴ We front-loaded engineering units in our force flow, but it would take weeks before they would be on the ground to help in a meaningful way. Indian Army units started arriving right away, but coordination was extremely difficult, because we had never included them in our exercises.



Photo by U.S. Army Pacific.

Picture 9. U.S. Military Training Bangladeshi Responders.

We did many things right. We learned from our past experiences and applied the best practices, to include early alert of engineer, logistics, medical, and signal units. We mobilized dozens of contracting officers and established liaison with USAID, international governmental organizations (IGOs), and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). We established a Joint

Task force (JTF) and put a well-trained commander in charge.

As I reflected on the difference between the plan and the execution, a few ideas emerged. First, those partners we have been conducting exercises with were in the earthquake zone. Most of them were among the victims and were not much help. At any rate, our exercises never anticipated a disaster this size. We were overconfident about our ability to respond and their ability to operate. The Center of Excellence for Disaster Management folks told me that we kept making the same mistakes over and over.³⁵

Our exercises over the past few years had been great political events, but had done little to prepare our partners for a real disaster. If we were serious about building partner capacity, we had a lot of work to do in presenting realistic scenarios that challenged capabilities. It was too late to build capacity after the crisis has started. Also, our exercises should have included the most likely external responders if they were going to be of any use for planning. You do not want to meet a new partner in the middle of a crisis like we did this time.

The differences in our exercises and what happened on the ground was foreseeable. Dhaka was a fragile city, with obvious potential for a large-scale natural disaster that dwarfed the 2011 Haiti Earthquake. Lack of elected city government and widespread corruption led to a capability vacuum between the neighborhood and national level. Unregulated construction resulted in a large proportion of the multistory buildings in the city being vulnerable to collapse. USAID and the Bangladesh Department of Disaster Management estimated that a minimum of 76,000 buildings would likely collapse during an earthquake of 7.0 or higher.³⁶ Other estimates were much higher (one study suggests that 200-300,000 buildings would collapse).³⁷ The immedi-

ate search and rescue problem was only the beginning. It looks like around 400,000 buildings were damaged beyond repair, including nearly all of the 850 hospitals.³⁸ Disease, dehydration, and starvation are the next threats. Our exercises surely did not prepare us for this!

Second, using lessons from our past operations was not necessarily the best way to approach planning for this event. While past experience can be useful, it was important to know what was different about our current context. While we based much of our planning on the U.S. response to Haiti, Dhaka is not Port-au-Prince. Besides the fact that Dhaka has more than 10 times the population, its physical layout is also very different. Looking at the map, I observed the differences in the geography: The ports and the coastline, in particular, were a real issue. It was a long ways from Chittagong to Dhaka, and that road was nearly useless between the flooding and the traffic. The coastline was nearly all delta, which made over-the-shore logistics very difficult, and overland travel from there nearly impossible. We should have seen that coming.

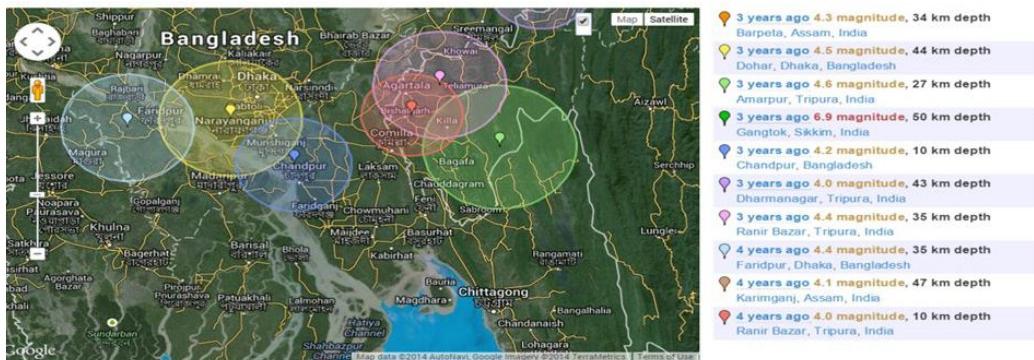


Figure 2. Earthquakes in Bangladesh.
Note the Distance from Dhaka to Chittagong,
the Nation's Only Port.³⁹

One of the biggest lessons from Haiti was the use of contracting officers to procure food and water quickly for the population. While PACOM stood ready with contracting officers, the bigger challenge was finding suppliers who could actually deliver food and water to the population. Making room to operate was a bigger problem here, too. There was little to no room to establish refugee camps or operating bases in Dhaka. Undocumented and informal urban growth over the last decade has consumed nearly every inch of open space in the city. Our maps were relatively useless in helping us understand the city and the actual whereabouts of the people. Unregulated growth also meant that we really could not know how many victims there were, or where they would try to go.

Third, we were not really sure what the Chinese, Indians, or other regional responders would do. While we conducted exercises with the Bangladeshi Army and the FSCD, we did not include other potential partners. Coordinating the efforts would have been much easier if we had exercised together before the event. We were playing a pick-up game when it counted the most. We typically get great political benefits from conducting exercises bilaterally, but the loss of goodwill we experienced because of the muddled response was entirely counterproductive.

In Haiti, 26 countries provided significant military assets to earthquake response. We should have expected close to that in Dhaka, but we had not worked with most of these potential partners. The challenges of geography, logistics, and sustainment frustrated potential partners, as it was difficult to move and sustain response forces in this environment. We must manage this closely at the highest levels, as the political implications of frustrating partners will have

resounding effects. USAID lacks sufficient staffing to integrate representatives from United Nations (UN) and NGO relief activities. PACOM has to augment USAID in this capacity. We also have to be sensitive to sovereignty issues: As the government of Bangladesh (GOB) recovers, they will be in charge of the operations. Augmentation to the GOB may be another significant requirement for us.

The Indian military was prepared to contribute the most to the effort. They may, in fact, be the lead response nation as their ability to respond is greater than anyone else's. We are not always good at letting other nations take the lead, but we should be prepared to take a secondary role if India steps up. It would have been nice if we had included them in exercises prior to this, where we could have sorted all of this out. Perhaps the example of the Multinational Coordination Center established in the Philippines after Super Typhoon Yolanda would be a model for future exercises.⁴⁰

Fourth, I underestimated the friction between our sustainment supplies and the relief goods flowing in. We focused planning on getting our people and equipment here and sustaining them, but we seemed to have ignored the fact that every container that arrives for us was one less container for the population. Dhaka would be out of water in 2 days, and out of food in 3 days. This place was fragile before, and if we did not do this right, it was going to get a lot worse. Again, the earthquake was just the beginning.

In our rush to get our forces on the ground, we did not realize how much competition there would be for the strained flow systems. Our influx hindered the flow of other response nations and sustainment supplies for the millions of internally displaced persons that needed humanitarian assistance (HA). We dramati-

cally underestimated the number of victims (which drives how much HA needs to flow), and the number of other responders that needed to get to the city. Our poor planning unnecessarily contributed to the friction. In the future, our planners must find the balance between flowing forces in and bringing supplies to the city. We must not monopolize the flow systems for our own movement or sustainment, or we will make the situation worse.

Finally, we needed to figure out in advance how we were going to create a common operating picture (COP) for everyone. As we set up, we focused mostly on ourselves, establishing our networks but not including some of the other partners. Forget our classified systems. In fact, we probably needed to forget using military systems at all. One thing I did not find in any of our military “lessons learned” documents was the fact that social media was a better, faster, and more accurate means of getting a COP than anything we can do alone. Everyone from victims, NGOs, IGOs, and other interested parties can contribute, but only if we enable them. This was likely the most essential piece of our response: getting and distributing an accurate assessment of the problem.

The COP must truly be common. If we try to use our current software on unclassified systems, we will also create large challenges for our partner responders, both military and civilian. Additionally, we do not have enough collection assets or mapping capability to truly understand where help is most needed. The situation changes continuously and quickly, and our ability to understand and share is extremely limited. There will be huge competition for bandwidth, both by responders and survivors.

We must divorce ourselves from our understanding of a COP. In Haiti, CrisisMappers, a volunteer group formed on the Internet, developed real time mapping and situational understanding remotely using social media.⁴¹ U.S. Marine units were essentially being directed by volunteers in Syracuse, New York, who were monitoring, translating, and mapping disaster response needs in real time. None of the military lessons-learned documents actually captured this, and none of the military or government systems came close to replicating it. Most of our “lessons learned” were U.S. Government-centric, and failed to capture the amazing power of social media and crowd sourcing.

Creating a venue, downloadable applications, and real-time data-basing that not only enabled crowd sourcing and wiki mapping, but also exploited the power of social media for information sharing would have enabled all partners to understand simultaneously a true common operating picture. This will continue to be a huge challenge both to our signal and intelligence communities as they are stuck in 20th century procedures and capabilities, yet it is vital that responders learn how to use these powerful resources.



Source: *ICCM crismappers.net*.

Picture 10. CrisisMappers Gathered and Shared Information about the Haiti Earthquake More Quickly and Accurately than Official Channels.

I paused for a moment, taking in the destruction and chaos. “We can do this better,” I said to my driver. “We couldn’t do much worse,” he replied, heading for the truck. As we pulled out and headed back to the embassy, it dawned on me that an earthquake in Dhaka was really just one of the many challenges we could face in the Pacific. Climate change, massive urbanization, and unregulated growth in many Asian cities are creating similar dynamics in dozens of countries. If the United States wishes to remain the security partner of choice to the Asian nations, we are going to have to take a hard look at how we prepare to respond. After all, armed conflict is only one type of security concern. The prevention or easing of human suffering is something everyone understands, and doing it well gives the United States more credibility in the region than a dozen armed incursions. As we drove past the rubble and fires on our way back to the embassy, I jotted down a few notes to pass back to the team at PACOM.

Reflections.

1. Be realistic about “Building Partner Capacity.” It does not happen overnight and cannot happen during a crisis.
2. Find relevant examples. Not every lesson translates to your current situation. Context matters.
3. Be prepared to work with nontraditional partners. Not everyone you play with on game day went to the practices. By the way, one of the new players may be in charge.
4. Avoid self-centered planning. If your plan focuses on your forces more than the problem, you will hinder success. Keep the big picture in mind.
5. Make sure your “common operating picture” is truly common. Figure out the best way to create and maintain the picture for all partners.

FIFTH DREAM

A Nightmare with China.

I found myself in a large command and control facility, seated at a large table nestled beneath a colossal digital map of the world. The map was surrounded by large monitors, displaying various news reports and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) video feeds. It was sprinkled with icons from a broad spectrum of naval forces, which were conveniently color coded to discern between enemy and friendly forces. I quickly recognized that a large force on force engagement between U.S. and Chinese naval forces was already underway in the SCS. The number of red Chinese icons dramatically outnumbered and surrounded the blue U.S. icons, and this caused great distress for an admiral seated at the head of the table. Like a scene

from Dr. Strangelove, he angrily pounded his fist on the table and cursed at the big board. The rest of the players surrounding the table recognized they were powerless to influence the contest, as it unfolded on the screen before them. The admiral shook his head in disbelief, “How did this happen—how did we not see this coming?” His question was rhetorical, but a young analyst seated next to me leaned in and quietly offered a detailed explanation.

China’s economic growth was both astonishing and alarming to rest of the world. It was also unsustainable. The prosperity of its economy hinged on exports and aggressive currency manipulation, thus the Western economic crisis of 2008 also stunted China’s economic progress.⁴² To mask the slower growth, China accumulated a massive amount of debt and invested most of the money in state-owned enterprises. This practice resembled the U.S. housing bubble, and it created a similar debt bomb. When the bubble burst, the debt bomb ravaged the Chinese economy.

The collapse of North Korea further strained the Chinese economy, as hordes of refugees flooded China’s border. The conditions within North Korea were far worse than anyone had imagined, and the world was ill-prepared to deal with the scale of the calamity. Collaboration between South Korea, the United States, and China was imperative to plot a productive future for North Korea, yet distrust and lack of transparency dominated these engagements; cooperation was steadily replaced with competition and suspicion. The Chinese government was furious with U.S. interventions in North Korea—this was a problem on China’s borders that should be handled by China alone. Western meddling was completely unwelcome. There were also frequent clashes between U.S. and Chinese military forces, as both sought to stabilize and control North

Korea on their terms. These confrontations had not yet escalated beyond a few warning shots, but it was only a matter of time before blood would be shed. China's own economic struggles, coupled with the strain of the influx of North Korean refugees caused mass uprisings against Communist Party officials.⁴³

Desperate to squash the rebellion and distract the masses, China's rulers saw an opportunity in the SCS. China's claims to Taiwan were a matter of national pride. Reclaiming the island would fuel the fire of Chinese nationalism, and the people would quickly forget their own selfish economic struggles.⁴⁴ While the United States maintained a hardline with China on the sovereignty of Taiwan, there was no cause to believe that China would violently enforce its claims. Thus, the United States was caught completely off guard when the invasion began.

China began the assault with a barrage of ballistic and cruise missiles to weaken Taiwan's defensive systems. In the next salvo, she launched a wave of anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons, and cyberattacks to blind the U.S. response forces. A U.S. Carrier Strike Group (CSG) led by the USS *Eisenhower* launched from Japan and sped towards the Taiwan Strait. In an instant, I was in the tower of the *Eisenhower*. Flights of F-35Cs vaulted from the deck of the carrier, as the white glow of their afterburner plumes illuminated the night sky. Alerts sounded, as rapidly moving blips on the ship's radar screens warned of the hoard of inbound DF-21D carrier killer missiles. The missile launches were perfectly coordinated with crippling cyber and satellite attacks, disorienting and blinding the CSG's defense forces. The carrier killing missiles rained down from the skies at speeds exceeding MACH 10, and I braced for impact as the first wave of missiles met their mark. The explosions shook the carrier violently, as a massive fireball

engulfed the deck of the carrier, and destroyed two F-35Cs taxiing to the catapults. I sprinted down the stairs from the tower to assist with fire suppression, as a second salvo of missiles struck the carrier. The force of the explosion swept me off the deck like a rag doll, and I plunged into the cold water below. Choking on saltwater, I fought to keep my head above water. The deck of the carrier was now completely engulfed in flames, filling the air with a suffocating thick black smoke. Seconds later, a blinding flash filled the sky as a final salvo of missiles ravaged the ship. I desperately clung to a floating piece of wreckage. A loudspeaker boomed over the sounds of claxons and fire alarms with an unmistakable call for all hands to abandon ship. There, in the depths of the SCS, the unthinkable became a reality, and the mighty *Eisenhower* slowly sank beneath the waves.

With the blink of an eye, I was back in the Operations Center, watching the data link feed of four Air Force B-3 next generation bombers scrambling from Guam to make the 6-hour flight to strike military targets within China. China's sophisticated air defenses, consisting of land and ship mounted S-400 missile systems, could target nonstealth aircraft out to 400 kilometers (km).⁴⁵ These defense systems made air-to-air refueling over the SCS impractical, at least until the air defenses were rolled back. Thus, the bombers entered Chinese airspace without any fighter or airborne jamming escort. In support of the strikes, U.S. submarines exhausted their arsenals of Tomahawk land attack missiles against Chinese air defense systems, but these attacks barely left a dent in her formidable surface-to-air arsenal. Chinese J-20 fighters shot down two of the \$550 million stealth aircraft, while the other bombers successfully hit their targets and returned to Guam. Short of intercontinental ballistic missile strikes and long-range

cruise missiles, the rest of the U.S. military's weapons lacked the range to target China. It would take at least a day for the United States to position forces to mount a coordinated response.

Twenty-four hours after the campaign began, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) captured Taiwan, and U.S. forces entered the Pacific theater en masse, postured for retaliation. The losses of the battle were difficult to comprehend: a carrier strike group decimated, two 5th generation bombers destroyed, and Taiwan lost to the PLA. The entire conflict was so unexpected that the complex coordination to execute Air-Sea Battle tactics successfully never had the opportunity to manifest.

The young analyst stretched his hands behind his head and leaned back in his chair. Together we gazed at the debacle on the big board. I interrupted his train of thought and asked him to give me more background on China's military capabilities. On cue, he pulled out a binder filled with slides and continued his detailed discourse.

In 2014, China projected a military budget of \$132 billion.⁴⁶ While this figure may seem dramatic, China's increase in military spending is largely a reflection of her thriving economy.⁴⁷ In reality, the proportion of China's gross domestic product (GDP) allotted to defense spending has remained stagnant at 2 percent. In contrast, the United States spends 3.8 percent of its GDP on defense (See Figure 3).⁴⁸ However, when compared to other defense budgets in the region, the PLA is clearly amassing formidable military strength, more than doubling the expenditures of other regional competitors (See Figure 4).⁴⁹

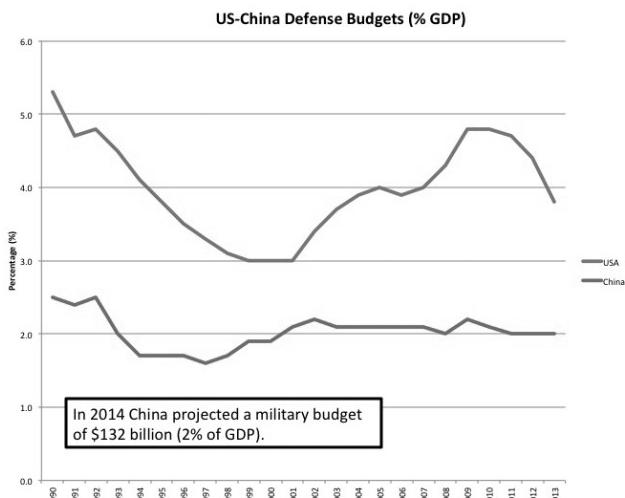


Figure 3. U.S.-China Defense Budgets GDP Percentage Comparison.⁵⁰

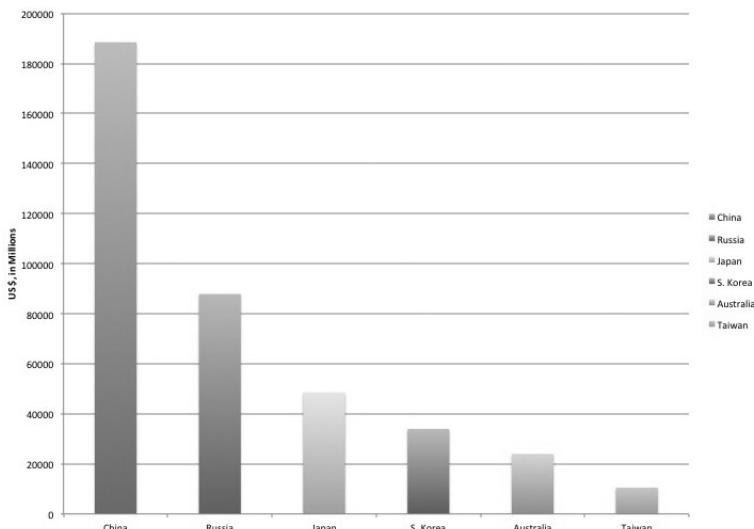


Figure 4. Asia Major Regional Powers 2013 Defense Budgets.⁵¹

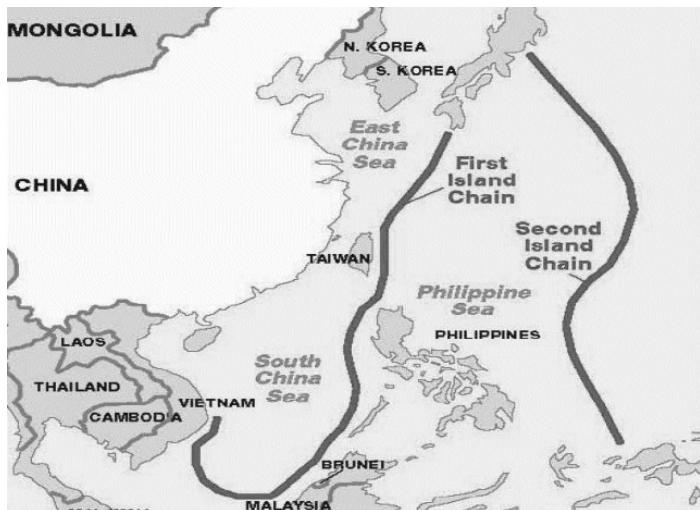
The much-hyped DF-21D anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) is central to China's anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) strategy. The weapon depends upon a series of networked systems, and sophisticated sensors to enable its terminal guidance against moving targets. Disrupting this system of systems will likely be the most productive approach to breaking the DF-21Ds kill-chain,⁵² and this is precisely the intent of tactics derived from the Air-Sea Battle concept.⁵³ Regardless, the emergence of ASBMs, like the DF-21D, present a point of inflection for the U.S. Navy, which in recent history has enjoyed sanctuaries of operation, free from any credible threats of enemy fire. This will clearly not be the case in the SCS. Current estimates place the DF-21Ds maximum effective range at over 2,000-km,⁵⁴ which would allow China to target aircraft carriers or support vessels at distances reaching the second island chain (see Map 2 on page 44).⁵⁵



Photo by Auaimoer.

Picture 11. China's DF21D ABM.

The PLA has also invested in large numbers of highly accurate anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCM). Virtually every modern surface ship in the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is capable of employing ASCMs.⁵⁶ These weapons have small radar signatures, fly at low altitude at supersonic speeds, and can be employed in salvos. These flight profiles may saturate CSG air defense systems, increasing the probability that the weapons will reach their targets.⁵⁷ For these reasons, military analysts have labeled these weapons as the true carrier killers.⁵⁸



Map 2. Depiction of the First and Second Island Chain.⁵⁹

The People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) is also in the process of fielding two 5th Generation fighters, the J-20 and the J-31. While information on these aircraft is obviously limited, they are clearly born from the same DNA as the U.S. F-22 and F-35. Both aircraft will likely employ the PLAAF PL-12 and PL-13 air-to-air missiles. These missiles are postulated to be capable

of destroying aircraft in a heavy electronic attack environment at extended range.⁶⁰ No doubt, the air supremacy the United States has taken for granted in previous conflicts, will be difficult, if not impossible to sustain in a war with China. Unescorted bombers will also be acutely vulnerable to this 5th Generation air threat.

Finally, China seeks to exploit U.S. dependence upon command, control, communication, computer, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) systems. These systems are the lifeblood that will allow the United States to create the cross-domain synergy necessary to thrive in the A2/AD environment. China's ASAT systems are capable of kinematic strikes against global positioning systems, surveillance, and communications satellites.⁶¹ In 2007, China demonstrated this capability, as it used an ASAT system to target one of its aging satellites in orbit.⁶²

As the young analyst concluded, he excused himself and wandered down a darkened corridor at the base of the big board. I remained in my chair and silently reflected on the scene before me. This was a command and control facility, but command and control were illusions. The big board was a portal that allowed us to witness the events completely detached from the violence, yet we were nothing more than powerless bystanders. Our ability to influence the events had long since passed, and in that moment our mistakes were brutally clear to me. All the destabilizing forces in the region—piracy, human trafficking, terrorism, the threat of natural disasters, and the collapse of North Korea—these were critical opportunities for collaboration. Addressing these issues clearly served the interests of both the United States and China, yet our continued parallel noncollaborative efforts and our persistent lack of transparency locked us onto a violent collision course.

Reflections.

1. Be realistic about military capabilities. A military conflict with China is a scenario that even the best equipped U.S. military will be challenged to handle.
2. Invest in the right kinds of future technologies. Our most coveted weapons systems may be acutely vulnerable to emerging threats in the region. Consider that our current weapons paradigms (stealth fighters and bombers, aircraft carriers, etc.) may be rendered obsolete.
3. Do not count on “on call” capabilities defeating every threat. The promises of Air-Sea Battle can only be realized if military forces have sufficient warning to coordinate and synergize effects.
4. Invest in relationships and trust. The path to peace in the Indo-Asia-Pacific is one of collaboration with China, leveraging our common interests to build fruitful relationships.

SIXTH DREAM

A Better Way.

The tension and volume in the voice of the Joint Operations Center (JOC) Director snapped me out of my uncomfortable slumber. He was in the face of his information technology (IT) contractor, pointing vigorously at the wall of big screens, demanding the latest in a series of “computer glitches” be resolved immediately. “The Admiral will be down here in 20 minutes for her update. We can’t very well *update* her if we don’t have the COP!” he said, referring to the common operational picture that remained the centerpiece of PACOM’s increasingly frequent Battle Updates to the PACOM

Commander. Now occurring every 4 hours, I could see the so-called “battle rhythm” was increasing to a point that it was affecting the staff. The staffing cuts forced by sequestration and budget cuts less than a decade ago had yet to be overcome—“more with less.” The pace of the current multiple crises was already affecting the endurance of the PACOM headquarters staff. This was compounded by the “pull” from the operational level, which had resulted in about one-fifth of the staff being “farmed out” to the JTF staffs. A quick glance around the JOC confirmed my concerns: Drawn faces and sunken eyes stared back at me—or past me. And civilian staff members (GS civilians and contractors) nearly equaled the uniformed members of this, the staff of the largest regional combatant command in the U.S. military. Core responsibilities were, of course, covered by military officers, but it was a thin veneer between the military directors and division chiefs and the civilian/contractor “worker bees.”

The buzzing from one of those “worker bees” was close by and familiar. It was the same analyst from my earlier dream. He was droning on and on with his analysis. I was amazed at (and a little bit intimidated by) the intellect of this young 20- something. A series of questions swirled in my head: How did he get his Ph.D. so young? How much should I rely upon his assessments? How does education and intellect compare to operational experience? Could he maneuver a “Ten-Oh” Bear Randy Rarick surf board on the North Shore? I shook my head to break out of this useless loop of rhetorical questions. “Hold that thought for a minute,” I said to the analyst. “I need some coffee.” I briefly stepped out to the small food court attached to the headquarters building and grabbed a quick dark roast. Returning to the JOC, I was met as I was coming through the door by

a bright-eyed Air Force staff sergeant. “Sir, the Senior Enlisted Adviser has instituted a policy of no food or drink in the JOC. . . . I guess we’re too sloppy.” I flashed him my best “ornery O-6” glare, moving past him to my seat next to the JOC Director’s perch. The screens had miraculously returned to their normal state—a confusing mosaic of multi-colored icons depicting “friendly,” “enemy,” “partner,” and a multitude of other designations. “Okay, where were we?” I said to the analyst as I felt the first hit of hot caffeine, “Run it down from the beginning, again . . . if you don’t mind.”

China’s economic engine had faltered. Actually, it was failing. Unsustainable growth, domestic demographic and political factors, and external influences converged to create a deteriorating state that challenged the Chinese regime’s hold on legitimate power. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) had over-reached. Extending its economic appetite worldwide had satisfied immediate needs to continue to fuel the Chinese engine, but it had come at a cost. China had become embroiled in messy stability problems that impinged upon its activities and investments in Africa.⁶³

As the United States had become less and less embroiled in the Middle East, China had been forced to become more involved in that region, attempting to ensure the necessary flow of oil demanded by the voracious Chinese machine. The consequences of China’s “One Child” policy had come home to roost. Chinese parents were none too happy as their only children came home in body bags from what were increasingly viewed as expeditions of choice versus conflicts of necessity. As Chinese economic power receded, its once formidable ability to pry acquiescence from weaker neighbors dropped precipitously. Money follows the

path of least resistance, and that flow had been diverted as economies sought more stable markets. See Figures 5 and 6.

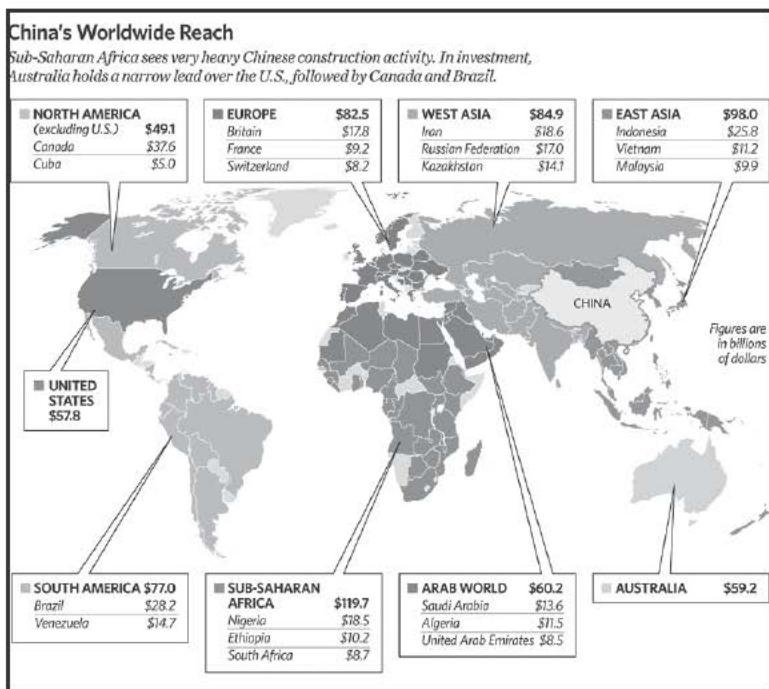


Figure 5. China's Worldwide Reach.⁶⁴

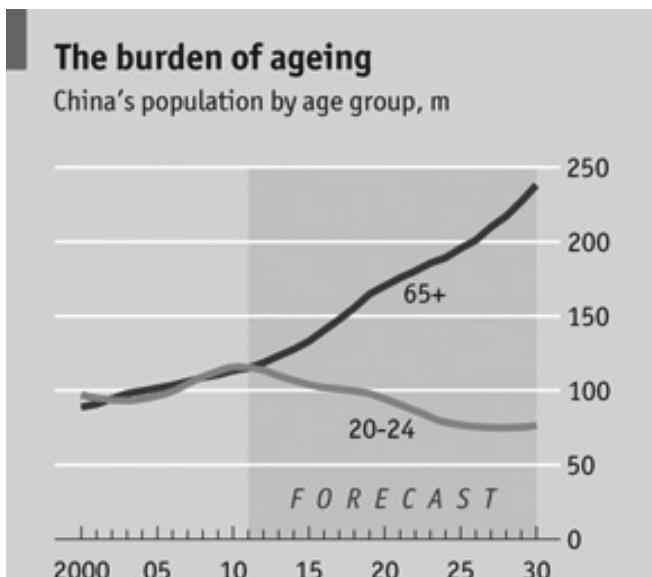


Figure 6. China Is Getting Older Before It Gets Rich.⁶⁵

Other consequences surfaced as well, of course. The massive Chinese population, more than half of which was now urbanized, created a commensurate demand for everything from energy to food. These urban masses presented an entirely new set of security issues for the PRC . . . issues the central government seemed ill-prepared to tackle.⁶⁶ The seas off the shores of the PRC were more and more prone to friction and flashpoints over sources for fish as well as oil and gas. As economic security became more of an issue for the Chinese people, increases in illicit and illegal activities spiked. Proliferation of technologies and weapons occurred more often and were more visible, revealing troubling links to terrorist organizations throughout the region. Desperate for opportunities that were increasingly scarce in China, human trafficking dramatically increased,

impacting the European and North American economies as well as those of Southeast Asia, as Chinese sought opportunities that alluded them at home.

With China focused on domestic stability, North Korea was further weakened. The PRC, patron to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) regime, had been unable to sustain its historical levels of support to the rogue nation. The North Korean leader, ever suspicious of internal threats to his hold on power, had fallen back on a tried-and-true strategy: development through coercion. North Korean brinksmanship had increased along with bellicose statements against the South Koreans and the United States. Revealing the depth of North Korean despair, the frequency and degree of the regime's famous provocations also increased. Although the development of North Korea's ballistic missile program had slowed corresponding with the decrease in Chinese financial support, the regime had actually augmented its "test program," firing almost a dozen missiles into neighboring seas and in the direction of Japan and the United States in the past 12 months. Brinksmanship was no longer the effective tool it had once been. Unable to leverage bad behavior for financial, economic, and social support, the North Korean regime began to fracture and instability (and collapse) loomed.

North Korean proliferation networks, previously all but dormant, were reenergized and links had been discovered with at least two Southeast Asian terrorist groups. But the collapse of North Korea was most attributable to the dire food shortages exacerbated by last year's severe winter and multiple hits by typhoons later. Crops were decimated, and famine reached into the higher levels of the North Korean regime and the military. Even elite units, charged with protecting the

regime's most privileged, were impacted—suffering resource deficits that lesser units had lived with for generations.



Source: *frontpagemag.com*.

Picture 12. Much of the North Korean Population Suffers from Malnutrition.

Civil unrest, once unheard of, began sporadically. These uprisings were quickly followed by limited insurrections within the military. The response was immediate. Crushed by the regime, the population was left no choice, and the mass exodus via the Chinese border began. The regime was powerless to prevent the flight of an estimated 30 percent to 50 percent of its population, especially since the regime itself had begun to disintegrate. Factions emerged, challenging regime leaders and backed by military leaders turned warlords.

With North Korean refugees swarming their border, the Chinese were faced with yet another security challenge that they could ill-afford. Domestic stability was at an all-time low in the PRC, mostly due to the economic downturn and the effect on livelihoods at nearly every level—not to mention Central Government budgets. Strikes and social uprisings throughout the country became more common and impossible to conceal. The intractable security crises the PLA had engaged in abroad had soured the Chinese people on the use of force and diminished their confidence in its capabilities.

The grab for Taiwan was a gambit the new Chinese president was using to divert domestic attention, occupy a restless and perennially recalcitrant PLA, and provide an opportunity (should things go “well south”) for a run at disputed oil and gas rich territories in the South and East China Seas. But it wasn’t going as well as the PRC leadership had planned—or needed.

I had been Director of the PACOM Commander’s Action Group for just less than a year, being plucked from my rather comfortable office on the third deck. I had just become accustomed to my previous job as the Southeast Asia Policy Division Chief in the J5. It had been a bit painful (my first joint assignment) but I had eventually adjusted, thanks to an extremely competent crew of military and civilian country directors. I had been CAG Director long enough to recognize the look I got from the admiral over her reading glasses as she strode past me and to the head of the briefing table with her Foreign Policy Advisor (FPA) Ambassador Glazer right on her heels. I glanced at the JOC Director and said, “Giddy up, John. Let’s get this thing going.” I walked up behind the J3, the Marine two-star with his ever-present smile, who was just taking his seat: “Sir,

her first question will be ‘Are we closing in on our desired state?’” He nodded briefly and went back to his green notebook.

The JOC Director had the update slides posted to the big screens and then indicated to the J2 that he could begin the briefing. “The Deuce” ran through the confusing COP picture that had been frozen for the briefing just moments ago. He summarized that, while they were able to push some forces ashore on Taiwan, the PLA effort appeared to have stalled. Despite their formidable A2/AD capabilities, the PLA had been unprepared for recent technology leaps the United States had developed that significantly reduced the effectiveness of Chinese efforts. Two U.S. CSGs stood on the edge of Chinese range, but close enough to allow U.S. capabilities to influence the advance of the PLA invasion force.

The flow of North Korean refugees had diminished somewhat, but the PLA was having a devil of a time contending with the massive influx of helpless humanity. Dozens of refugee camps had been established on both sides of the border. All were overwhelmed, and some swelled with hundreds of thousands of North Koreans.

Militarily, the North Koreans were still quite active—especially at missile sites and recently revealed bases heretofore undetected. These newly discovered bases were of particular concern to the PACOM Commander as we had yet to determine what exactly was going on—known unknowns. The North Korean regime appeared to be gasping its last breath of air just as the PRC made its move for Taiwan—both the DPRK and the PRC taking advantage of the strategic distraction the other nation provided.

The J3 moved forward in his chair and began his portion of the briefing.

“Ma’am, I’d like to change things up a bit for this update. Ambassador Glazer and I have discussed the situation extensively and think we are approaching a point where, if trends can be reinforced, we will be able to begin the turn from Phase III to Phase IV of operations. That is to say, Admiral, that we believe our desired state may be in site.” Removing her reading glasses and looking up from the briefing notebook on the table in front of her, the PACOM Commander asked, “And remind me, what is our desired state?” Expecting the rhetorical question, the general replied: “As approved by the [National Security Council], our desired state is: The territorial integrity of democratic Taiwan is preserved, North Korean offensive capabilities are destroyed and the DPRK regime is removed, human suffering on the Korean peninsula is mitigated, conditions are set for a return to regional stability with the PRC assuming a primary, productive role.” Half-jokingly, the Commander said to her Deputy, “Not so long ago, the military would have tried to do this on its own.” Returning her attention to the update briefing, the J3 continued, aided by the well-timed comments of the FPA.

In the back of my mind, I heard the analyst’s voice from a recent “deep dive” on Sino-U.S. relations . . . :

The U.S. “One China Policy” is hardly monolithic. Its pillars are the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, the Three Communiques, and the Six Assurances.⁶⁷ Together, these three pillars confined how the United States could and would engage in its relationship with the rise of China. Chinese and American perspectives on the path relations have taken differ, of course. What has resulted, however, are well-worn “ruts”

from which departure is difficult (if not impossible) to achieve. The arc of Sino-U.S. relations has gone from one of promised stability to one of increased tension. Suspicion and lack of transparency have cloaked the relationship with a sense of inevitable conflict. The Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 (TRA) is both prescriptive and proscriptive. At once, it recognizes the People's Republic as the sole legal government of China and requires U.S. support for the territorial integrity of democratic Taiwan.⁶⁸

Ambassador Glazer's professorial tone brought me back to the discussion at the briefing table . . . :

Developing productive, stable relations with the PRC had been nearly impossible. Decades of mistrust and skepticism, anchored in Cold War thinking, had fostered an environment in which every problem was a security problem and the (predetermined) solution of choice involved the use of force. In late 2017, the new U.S. and Chinese presidents met on the margins of the East Asia Summit in Singapore.

What began as a pro forma, pre-scripted meeting changed dramatically when the two leaders excused their respective delegations. Retaining only personal translators, the Chinese and American leaders spent 2 1/2 hours in a one-on-one discussion that yielded the Singapore Communique. Modest as the steps it enumerated were, the Singapore Communique represented a tectonic shift in Sino-U.S. relations. The two sides agreed to pursue enhanced engagements, setting aside for the moment the most vexing issues between the two powers (e.g., Taiwan). Initial steps included officer exchanges allowing PLA officers to attend U.S. Senior Service Colleges and U.S. officers to attend counterpart Chinese institutions. Diplomatically, the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue

(S&ED) was modified. It would move beyond its annual meeting in alternating capitals and now included more frequent meetings at various levels. These additional forums served to broaden and deepen the Sino-U.S. conversation and, significantly, began to erode layers of distrust. Perhaps most significant, however, was the agreement to develop cooperative approaches to security issues of concern to both parties. Specifically, the American and Chinese leaders acknowledge the dire implications of the deteriorating security situation on the Korean peninsula. While U.S. and Chinese concerns did not match exactly, both presidents agreed that the trajectory was unacceptable and that cooperation would be required in order to avoid another military conflict on the peninsula.

The J3 interjected the fact that the convening of the “High Level Committee on Korean Stability” in the first place was remarkable. Even more, the fact that it had been kept behind closed doors and its deliberations and decisions largely secret would have been unfathomable just a few years ago. The General opined that the fact that we were not engaged with the PLA on the peninsula simultaneous with the current Taiwan engagement was directly attributable to the High Level Committee’s success.

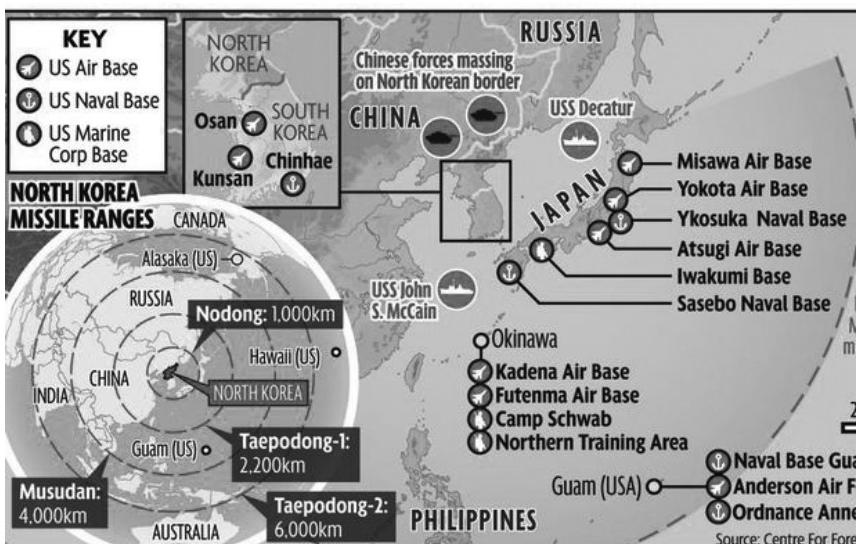
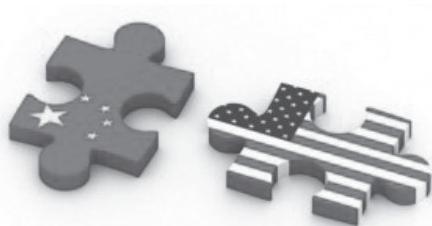


Figure 7. North Korean Missile Threats Are a Global Problem, Not Just Regional.⁶⁹

"Weren't you and your PLA Committee counterpart classmates at Carlisle Barracks?" the Admiral interrupted. "Yes, ma'am," the J3 responded. "Lieutenant General Liu and I were in different seminars, but we took two electives together – including Great Books. He was forever complaining there were no Chinese books on the reading list! That interaction was invaluable, ma'am. It framed my understanding of the relationship and, from an operational perspective, my friendship with Liu has not only established a communications link but has allowed me to see things from the Chinese perspective . . . to some degree."⁷⁰

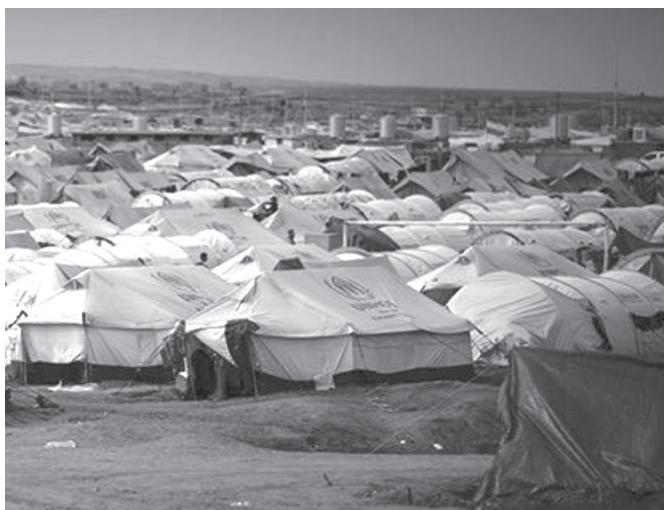
"Please continue, gentlemen," the Commander directed, realizing time was wasting. The J3 continued with a short discussion of the developing standoff in the East and South China Seas. Losses on both sides had been significant in the early stages, but both sides dem-

onstrated restraint as the situation evolved rapidly. The FPA and the J3 then described how we had successfully leveraged new and emerging partnerships with regional nations to create an environment that would not tolerate a Chinese hegemon. Vietnam and Malaysia, perhaps the most advanced of South China Sea claimants had tilted toward the United States as the PRC flexed its muscles and attempted to pick off the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) claimant nations one by one. While neither had been willing to become treaty allies of the United States, tentative partnerships had grown strong, resulting in access agreements and increasingly frequent exercises—which meant increased interoperability. Indonesia, maintaining its beloved nonaligned status and its mantra of “a thousand friends and no enemies,” had nevertheless developed into a net security contributor. U.S. efforts to support the development of Indonesian disaster response and peacekeeping capabilities were now paying dividends. Indonesia had been named to lead the UN peacekeeping and transitional authority efforts in North Korea. Moreover, the Indonesian military was now heading the ASEAN Response Force managing refugee camps on the North Korean side of the PRC-DPRK border.



Graphic by *economyincrisis.org*.

Picture 13. The United States and China May be the Best Fit for Each Other . . . If They Would Only Act Like It.



Source: *unrefugees.org.au*.

Picture 14. UN Refugee Camps Are Only a Temporary Solution.

Careful to avoid entanglement in the current crisis, India had acknowledged its stake in the broader region and stepped forward to secure commercial shipping through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, and on through the southern stretches of the SCS.

The J3 and the FPA, nearing the end of their update, were painting a complex picture that, although not yet certain, provided a view toward the so-called “desired state”:

- Taiwan—*status quo ante*
- North Korea—regime change and protracted international assistance/development efforts initiated
- Stable Asia-Pacific region—China a productive leader, fully integrated into an evolving international order that accommodates Chinese aspirations.

Ambassador Glazer reminded the PACOM Commander that none of this would have been possible without integrated regional decisionmaking facilitated by empowered interagency representatives at PACOM. Glazer noted his appointment in the PACOM headquarters as the first Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Regional Coordination was a huge step forward for State/Department of Defense coordination and cooperation. The authority the FPA had been given by the PACOM Commander, directive authority equivalent to a Deputy Commander, had been instrumental in this success. It had resulted in common procedures and a truly integrated strategy across the region which had, in turn, facilitated what appeared to be a viable solution to multiple, converging security dilemmas.



Source: *militaryimages.net*.

Picture 15. The Indian Navy Is Among the Most Powerful and Professional in the World.

As the update briefing broke up, the analyst followed me into the headquarters' expansive foyer. Stopping in front of the many displays that depicted the histories of the headquarter's namesakes (Admiral Chester Nimitz and General Douglas MacArthur), I had said to the young Ph.D.: "About the time you were starting grad school, a series of controversial but crucial changes were being initiated. Those changes, in both policy and legislation, were necessary for us to be able to walk out of that briefing with some sense of accomplishment. We all knew the issues that were in our way. The funny thing about human beings is we rarely make obvious changes until we are forced to do so. And more often than not, we make the changes after the fact."

As I turned to step out the front door for my first breath of fresh Hawaiian air in 36 hours, I reviewed in my head how we had come to work together better, break down some of the opacity with our adversaries, and, in some cases, work with them. . . .

Reflections.

1. Facilitate (or force) interagency coordination and collaboration in both planning and execution. Interagency representatives at the combatant command headquarters must have a mandate (and authority) from their home agency. They also need the training, experience, and the full understanding of the commander's plans and decision criteria.
2. Develop, at every level possible, linkages and personal interactions with allies, partners, and even potential adversaries. Address the "trust deficit" through increased transparency in formal/official interactions, professional military education venues, and informal opportunities.
3. Move beyond "unsolvable" problems and focus on more benign areas of common concern where trust and collaborative approaches can foster greater understanding and develop habits of productive interaction. These can yield great results when the tougher problems arise.

EPILOGUE

The Indo-Asia-Pacific region encompasses over half the world's population and global trade,⁷¹ the majority of its current and future mega cities, seven of the world's 10 largest armies,⁷² most of the world's nuclear powers, three of the largest economies,⁷³ and accounts

for 80 percent of the world's natural disasters.⁷⁴ As the United States increases its strategic focus on this vital region, it would be all too easy to become fixated on the burgeoning competition between great powers and overlook or misunderstand the myriad, interconnected complexities that enrich the region and are the real *force majeure*. Simplistic or ill-fitting policy options may be equally enticing.

The fictional narratives or “dreams” outlined in the preceding sections seek to depict these interrelated dynamics in a palpable way and provide a comprehensive strategic document that is readable, instructive, and provocative. The series of six distinct dreams explore a progression of steadily escalating planning and contingency scenarios—from steady state security cooperation activities, to piracy, human security, terrorism, environmental disaster, and major combat. The narratives challenge the reader to consider several regional dynamics, reflect on a multitude of intended (and unintended) consequences of U.S. action, and share in the many strategic observations our protagonist makes during his hypothetical sleep-induced journey. The sixth and final dream weaves these themes and lessons together to comprehensively highlight the unique opportunities for “collective assurance” borne through enhanced collaboration and understanding. Most significantly, the closing dream challenges our traditional definition of strategic “success” and encourages the development of a “better way.” Building on the specific observations outlined by our protagonist along his journey, we offer the following synthesis of strategic insights for further consideration by policymakers and strategists.

Insight 1: Understand the Environment.

At its core, the PACOM AOR is a very complex geopolitical system with numerous internal and external dynamics and actors at play. The primary drivers of this system appear to be the ongoing strategic competition between the United States and China, and the perceived insecurity of other nations that may feel compelled to choose one over the other. The United States typically emerges as the desired partner for security interests, and China is the preferred choice when the stakes are financial. The dynamic interplay of these changing alliances and partnerships could be likened to a basic weighing scale, with the balance of power shifting by issue and interest. However, to view this environment as a zero sum game for influence between the great powers is a perilous and ill-fitting generalization. Policymakers require a comprehensive, systemic, and more accurate understanding of the PACOM AOR due to the sheer scope and scale of the region. The complexity of the region is further increased by the presence of multiple global and regional powers, and the multitude of small nation states whose UN voting power is disproportionate to their size. In this context, understanding the potential consequences of our actions (or inactions) is vital for effective steady state and contingency planning.

Insight 2: The Cost of Collaboration Is Lower than the Price of Failure.

Substantive interagency, international, and non-governmental collaboration is essential throughout the entire policymaking and planning process. This is particularly true when seeking to understand and engage

in a complex, adaptive environment like the PACOM AOR. While the costs and hurdles of securing cooperation may be challenging, the price of incomplete and erroneous understanding is far greater. This is particularly apparent in an environment like the PACOM AOR, where the military tool set—and, arguably, any government face—may be insufficient in dealing with and understanding the challenges at hand. Having the right expertise, credibility, and viewpoints in the room is essential to strategic success.

Insight 3: Expect Unintended Effects.

Simplistic solutions or strategies that may have worked in other areas are unlikely to work the same way if applied without careful consideration. Insufficient understanding of the differences in context is likely to lead to unintended effects. These may exacerbate and transform the original problem into something different or worse.

Strategists and policymakers need to systematically understand the problem, comprehensively plan, and contingency plan, and then execute with flexibility—cognizant that any action will result in a reaction that is not necessarily equal (in proportion) or opposite (as it may be asymmetric).

Insight 4: Smart Power is Smart Strategy.

Terrorists and criminal elements challenge the legitimacy and sovereignty of the current order through violent extremism and other destabilizing means. Since the advent of al-Qaeda, Islamist extremists have become increasingly transnational and, in many cases, indistinguishable from local and regional criminal orga-

nizations. As much as they reject it, they are a product of globalization and will continue to exploit the many benefits brought by these profitable synergies. It is almost certain that a diaspora from the Middle East conflicts will reignite jihadist fires in the Indo-Asia-Pacific, and they will be more sophisticated than ever.

In dealing with this burgeoning threat, it will be important to distinguish between terrorism and terrorists and employ “smart power.” Strategically, it is more important to counter terrorism and mitigate its root causes than to defeat individual terrorists. Policy and decisionmakers are quick to declare that “we never negotiate with terrorists.”⁷⁵ A recent RAND study shows that, in fact, we do negotiate with terrorist leadership, and in most cases, we must—it is an important part of reducing the incidence (and the scale) of conflict—which is often achieved through a negotiated political solution.⁷⁶ The rub is finding the right blend of offensive and defensive (but not necessarily military) actions, which weaken terrorism and draw the terrorists into nonviolent engagement within legitimate political processes.

Smart power is the combined use of hard and soft power.⁷⁷ Smart power is conceptually elegant, but admittedly difficult to achieve. It is also a key aspect of America’s Global Strategy.⁷⁸ To defeat violent extremists and transnational criminal organizations, the intelligent application of smart power is required. Undermining such adversaries demands the employment of smart strategies which demonstrate strategic patience, build partner capacity, and defeat specific threats with agility and precision while supporting civilian governance, legitimate law enforcement, and national sovereignty. Deterrence must be matched with robust collective assurance. To achieve this, “civil-military

cooperation” needs to replace “joint operations” as the bywords for teamwork.

Insight 5: It Pays to be Prepared.

The disaster in Dhaka is a glimpse of the scale of human adversity coming to the PACOM AOR. While the region currently experiences widespread disasters, the magnitude of human suffering will dramatically increase. In 2025, there are likely to be 23 megacities,⁷⁹ with over 430 million Asian city dwellers at risk of coastal flooding and 350 million urban Asians at risk of inland flooding.⁸⁰ The urbanization of the population and insufficient infrastructure in areas prone to devastating natural disasters, and the increasing impact of climate change are a recipe for humanitarian crises on an unprecedented scale. Eradicating the threat of disaster is not possible. A comprehensive strategy to mitigate and manage disasters as they occur is required. To have a better chance of achieving this, governments, international organizations, NGOs, and other partners must plan ahead collaboratively. Only by paying a prudent premium for preparedness (collaboration, coordination, training, infrastructure research, and design) up front, will the downstream costs of chaos, governance upheaval, counterproductive responses, and human tragedy be reduced.⁸¹

Insight 6: “Mistrust” Causes the Nightmare Scenario.

Full-scale Sino-U.S. conflict is the Pacific nightmare, ultimately borne of mistrust and misunderstanding between the two great powers. “Trust is important for international cooperative endeavors, but the neglect

of distrust is not appropriate when national security or global peace are at stake.”⁸² In this context, “mistrust” describes a miscalculation in the trust/distrust balance. To avoid the Pacific nightmare, it is important to increasingly advance trust-related behavior between China and the United States. This includes consistent cooperation (working together on “smaller” issues makes it easier to collaborate on larger ones later), informal agreements, accepting influence, and transacting transparent business.

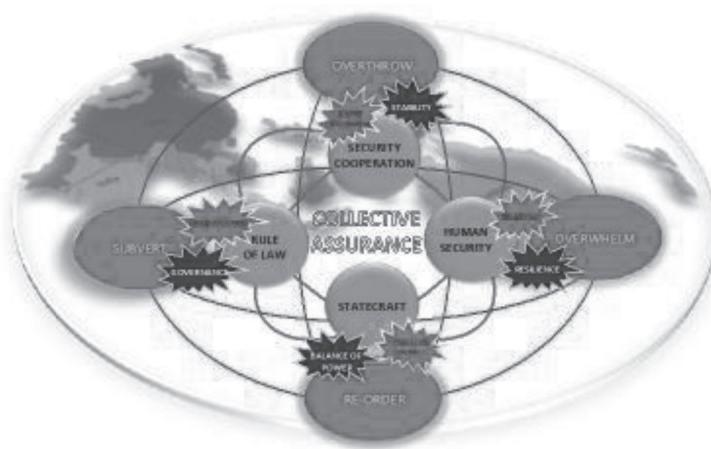
The Air-Sea Battle Concept is not intended to be viewed through the lens of a particular scenario or adversary, such as the defense of Taiwan against China.⁸³ Rather, it is designed to “set the conditions at the operational level to sustain a stable, favorable conventional military balance throughout the Western Pacific region.”⁸⁴ Yet, despite any rhetoric to the contrary, the United States is executing a significant strategic pivot to the PACOM AOR and is aggressively resourcing its military to counter capabilities that are primarily possessed or being pursued by China. Through the eyes of the Chinese, recent U.S. actions may be viewed as a revival of a Cold War strategy of containment, a perception that undermines our desire to foster a climate of stability and trust with China.⁸⁵ To help offset the negative effects of this military concept (arms races and mistrust), our approach must be complemented and reinforced with a strategy of assurance and collaboration (partnerships on human security, building resilient livable cities, empowering people and economies, reinforcing people-to-people linkages, and the cooperative use of security forces).

Air-Sea Battle is also designed to “deter China from acts of aggression or coercion in that region and, if necessary, to respond effectively in the event deterrence fails.”⁸⁶ While weapons systems such as aircraft carriers and stealth bombers are the backbone of our Naval and Air Forces, the United States must continually scrutinize strategies to reveal and overcome their vulnerabilities. A thinking and constantly evolving adversary may compel us to seek entirely different approaches, which may not include our most coveted weapons systems. We must be open to the possibility that the weapons, which define our strengths in one scenario, become our weaknesses in another.

CONCLUSION: A BETTER WAY – SECURITY THROUGH COLLECTIVE ASSURANCE AND UNDERSTANDING

Given the scale, complexity, and geographical attributes of the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, the stakes of “getting it right” are unprecedently high. The strategic observations presented in the sixth and final dream suggest: (1) understanding the complexity of the PACOM AOR; (2) institutionalizing a culture of collaboration between agencies, organizations and nations; (3) planning for second order and unintended effects; (4) building meaningful trust; and (5) employing smart power and civil military cooperation. Considering and responding to these observations will best enable regional stability and equip Indo-Asia-Pacific nations to manage effectively emerging crises. Similarly, while sovereign power politics are undoubtedly a significant influence, human security is increasingly important and will become more so in the coming decades. The meaningful pursuit of smart power and collective

assurance to address human security and mitigate human suffering is imperative. We also must take a hard look at whether current U.S. policies and strategies in the region will achieve their desired effects. Military concepts like Air-Sea Battle certainly have their value, but the consequences of such actions must be understood in the broader context. Deterrence, alone, is arguably counterproductive in this environment. For the majority of the world's humanity who live in the PACOM AOR, success will likely be measured by the stability and prosperity obtained under legitimate civil governance, not military victory. True success will require a better way—regional security through collective assurance and understanding. See Picture 16.



Picture 16. Collective Assurance.

Fundamentally, there are four major systemic pressures that need to be stabilized. State competition seeks to **reorder** the system, violent extremists seek to **overthrow** the system, illegal competitors seek to **subvert**

the system for pecuniary advantage, and, finally, natural forces have the potential to **overwhelm** the system. To manage these threats, security partners need to act collectively across a broad spectrum to provide **collective assurance** to the peoples, nations, and environment of the Indo-Asia-Pacific.

ENDNOTES

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among the littoral states was almost double the global average. Further, three of the top five fishery commodity exporters also hail from the region, with China at U.S.\$10.2 billion in 2009, Thailand at U.S.\$6.2 billion, and Vietnam at U.S.\$4.3 billion. See “The Fisheries-Food Security Nexus in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea: Impacts on Selected States and US Security Interests Out to 2020 and 2040,” Washington, DC: National Intelligence Council Report, November 12, 2012, available from www.stimson.org/images/uploads/Fisheries_Food_Security_Nexus.pdf, accessed November 11, 2014.

10. Stanley Weeks, “Piracy and Regional Security,” *Combating Piracy and Ship Robbery: Charting the Future in the Asia Pacific Waters*, Tokyo, Japan: Okazaki Institute, 2001, p. 100.

11. Philippe Leymarie, Philippe Rekacewicz, and Agnes Stenne, “UNOSAT Global Report on Maritime Piracy: A Geospatial Analysis 1995-2013,” *United Nations Institute for Training and Research Online*, 2014, available from www.unistar.org/unosat/piracy, accessed October 8, 2014. Note that piracy in the South China Sea accounts for over 50 percent of all piracy events across the globe.

12. Based on the 2013 *Global Slavery Index*, human trafficking across the PACOM Area of Responsibility is 65 percent of the world total and it is the most lucrative region. See *Profits and Poverty: The Economics of Forced Labour*, Geneva, Switzerland: International Labour Office, p. 4. However, India and China make up the bulk of that percentage with an estimated 18 million slaves, the largest number of any area in the world. See “Slavery Index 2013,” Dalkeith, Western Australia: Walk Free Foundation, 2013, p. 7. The South China Sea area represents approximately 4 percent of the global total with an estimated 1.2 million slaves. *Ibid.*, pp. 118-120.

13. “Trafficking for Organ Trade,” *Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking*, New York: United Nations, October 13, 2010, available from www.ungift.org/knowledgehub/en/about/trafficking-for-organ-trade.html, accessed October 22, 2014. Various human traffickers include brothel keepers for sex slaves, business owners for forced labor, homeowners for enforced servitude, insurgents for child soldiers, would-be parents trafficking babies, and organ sellers on the medical black market.

14. Human trafficking is caused by systemic underlying issues. See Robert B. Smith, "Why Human Development Varies by Region: Exploring Correlates and Causes," Cambridge, MA: Social Structural Research Inc, August 2003, p. 1; Dr. Kevin Bales, "Testing a Theory of Modern Slavery," Washington, DC: Free the Slaves, February 2006, p. 13, available from <https://www.freetheslaves.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Testing-a-Theory-of-Modern-Slavery.pdf>, accessed May 8, 2015; Alexis A. Aronowitz, *Human Trafficking, Human Misery: the Global Trade in Human Beings*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2009, p. 61; Leslie Holmes, ed., *Trafficking and Human Rights: European and Asia-Pacific Perspectives*, Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2010, p. 181; Krista Clement, "Stateless in Their Own Home," *VOICES UNESCO in the Asia-Pacific*, No. 25, January-March 2011, available from www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/culture/Trafficking/resource/Clement_VOICES_Article.pdf, accessed May 8, 2015.

15. The Joint Interagency Center for Strategic Lessons Learned (JICSL) does not currently exist. This has been identified by the authors as a necessary tool for the strategic decisionmaking community.

16. To date, pirates across the globe have not been brought before the International Criminal Court (ICC) for adjudication. The offenders are turned over to their home country for punishment. Incorporating the ICC as the judicial authority creates a harder, international stance on the problem. Since the United States is not a signatory to the ICC, turning over the pirates would become the responsibility of partners or affected countries.

17. James B. Comey, Director, FBI, "There will come a terrorist diaspora out of places like Syria and Iraq," *Speeches: International Association of Chiefs of Police 121st Annual Conference*, Orlando, FL: October 27, 2014, available from www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/the-fbi-and-the-iacp-facing-challenges-together, accessed November 17, 2014.

18. Bayu Setiono, "We planned to kill policemen and create a situation like Ambon and Poso, for the sake of upholding Islamic Sharia and the establishment of a caliphate in Indonesia," Setiono, 22, admitted in a nationally televised video he made for the police after his arrest. "Our targets, since 2007 until now, are infidels and policemen." See Martin Sieff, "Indonesia Focuses on

Stopping Terror Threat," *Asia Pacific Defense Forum*, USPACOM, September 12, 2012, apdforum.com/en_GB/article/rmiap/articles/online/features/2012/09/25/indonesia-terror-threat, accessed November 18, 2014.

19. The majority (99 percent of Indonesians) adhere to the Sunni Muslim tradition mainly of the Shafi'i school of jurisprudence. See Pew Research, "Sunni and Shia Muslims," *Religion & Public Life Project*, January 27, 2011, available from www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-sunni-and-shia/, accessed January 4, 2015. The tension between Sunni and Shia in Indonesia will certainly lead to more violence as majority Sunni religious leaders continue to call for jihad against the Shi'ites. See Robert Spencer, "Indonesia: Thousands at 'Anti-Shia Alliance' Event Call for Jihad against Shi'ites," *Jihad Watch*, April 20, 2014, available from www.jihadwatch.org/2014/04/indonesia-thousands-at-anti-shia-alliance-event-call-for-jihad-against-shiites, accessed January 4, 2015.

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21. Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT) is a U.S. Department of State designated terrorist organization and a splinter cell of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). The latter is most known for perpetrating the 2002 Bali bombings. In 2012, the group was thought to have approximately 1,500-2,000 members. The group remained very active in Indonesia in 2012, and it publicly maintained a website as of January 2013.

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In ISIL, we see a confluence of those two trends. We see a group of savages with a safe haven . . . who are also exploiting the Internet in very slick ways to try to radicalize and inspire people to engage in acts of violence, especially directed against those in uniform.

Available from www.fbi.gov/news/speeches/the-fbi-and-the-iacp-facing-challenges-together, accessed November 17, 2014.

26. JAT, and presumably JAS, have a cyber capability as reported in the Asia Pacific Defense Forum:

Rizki Gunawan, a JAT activist skilled in information technology, and two of his agents had successfully raised billions of rupiah [Indonesia's currency] by hacking into an online marketing web site. The group then channeled hundreds of millions of rupiah to the JAT's terror training camp in Poso on the northwest coast of the island of Central Sulawesi.

Sieff, "Indonesia Focuses on Stopping Terror Threat."

27. Aceh was a historically independent nation on the northern end of what is now Indonesia's Sumatran Island. Since 1949, two insurgencies were fought for Acehnese independence and against Indonesia's secular State; the first between 1951 and 1959 and the second fought by the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) from 1976 to 2004. See Kirsten E. Schulze, "The Free Aceh Movement (GAM): Anatomy of a Separatist Organization," *Policy Studies 2*, Washington, DC: East-West Center, 2004, pp. 1-2.

28. Aaron Y. Zelin, "When Jihadists Learn to Help," *The Washington Post*, May 7, 2014, available from www.washingtonpost.com/

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30. Turkish National Police, "Terrorism," 2012, available from www.egm.gov.tr/EN/Pages/terrorism.aspx, accessed November 18, 2014.

Turkey has had long standing experiences with counter-terrorism. Turkey had a security-oriented approach from 1970 to 2000. In this approach, the fight against terrorism is the same as the fight against terrorists. Turkey also had a reactive and reflective approach: a terrorist-enemy approach and military-criminal measures in the fight against terrorism. Since 2000, Turkey has changed her counter-terrorism approach into a multisided organizational approach. In this approach, the fight against terrorism is discussed as a fight against both terrorism and terrorists, a democratic and judicial approach: A terrorist=criminal oriented approach and multisided organizational approach are the basics of the fight against terrorism.

31. This is a very real and very significant problem. Emergency response planners at Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) stated that, in all likelihood, the entire city would burn to the ground since nobody would be able to shut off the gas. Personal notes, March 24, 2014, interview with DCC official.

32. In the 2013 Rana Plaza disaster, the army stood ready to help but waited 9 days for authorization to do so. It is difficult to say how many people died in the time it took to recognize the need for a military response. As of 2014, many key posts in the city government, including public works, fire and police, are now held by Bangladeshi Army officers who are "deputized" to serve in these institutions for a few years and then return to the Army.

33. Gary Cecchine *et al.*, *The US Military Response to the 2010 Haiti Earthquake: Considerations for Army Leaders*, Santa Monica,

CA: RAND, 2013, available from www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR304.html, accessed November 18, 2014.

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to force or other forms of coercion” against Taiwan and “provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character.” However, the TRA is not the only legislative or policy tool that impacts Sino-US relations. “The Three Communiqués refers to separate bilateral declarations made by three different U.S. presidents (Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan) and two Chinese premiers, Zhou and Deng. The communiqués effectively establish parameters for Sino-U.S. relations by defining each nation’s strategic vision—the Shanghai Communiqué; establishing formal diplomatic relations—the Normalization Communiqué; and declaring in the August 17 Communiqué, U.S. intent “to reduce gradually its sales of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to an ultimate resolution” contingent upon China undertaking peaceful reunification with Taiwan. The Six Assurances, on the other hand, were deliberate, specific declarations made by President Reagan to Taiwanese President Chiang intended to clarify the U.S. position: The United States had not agreed to set a date for ending arms sales to Taiwan; the United States had not agreed to hold prior consultations with the PRC on arms sales to Taiwan; the United States would not play any mediation role between Taiwan and Beijing; the United States had not agreed to revise the Taiwan Relations Act; the United States had not altered its position regarding sovereignty over Taiwan; and the United States would not exert pressure on Taiwan to enter into negotiations with the Chinese.

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77. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Get Smart: Combining Hard and Soft Power," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009 Issue, available from www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/65163/joseph-s-nye-jr/get-smart, accessed January 4, 2015.

78. *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review: Leading Through Civilian Power*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2010, p. ii, available from www.state.gov/s/dmr/qddr/, accessed December 12, 2014.

79. Asia and Africa are urbanizing faster than any other region, and are projected to be 64 percent urban by 2050. See *World Urbanization Prospects 2014*, New York: United Nations, 2014, p. 1, available from esa.un.org/unpd/wup/Highlights/WUP2014-Highlights.pdf, accessed December 12, 2014. By 2030, Asia will have 21 megacities (Tokyo, Delhi, Shanghai, Mumbai, Bombay, Beijing, Dhaka, Karachi, Kinki M.M.A., Osaka, Kolkata, Calcutta, Guangzhou, Chongqing, Manila, Bangalore, Chennai, Madras, Jakarta, Lahore, Hyderabad, Shenzhen, Krung Thep, Bangkok, Los Angles, and Chengdu) and two cities (Seoul and Nanjing) will be on the verge of megacity status. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision*, CD-ROM Ed., New York, United Nations, File 12: Population of Urban Agglomerations with 300,000 Inhabitants or More in 2014, by Country, 1950-2030, thousands.

80. An estimated 54 percent of the Asian and Pacific urban population lives in low-lying coastal zones. See UN-HABITAT, State of the World's Cities 2008/2009: Harmonious Cities, HS/1031/08E, Nairobi, Kenya, and New York: United Nations, 2008, p. 142, available from sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/11192562_alt-1.pdf, accessed December 12, 2014; Deborah Balk, Mark R. Montgomery, and Zhen Liu, "Urbanization and Climate Change Hazards in Asia," Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, September 22, 2012, p. 4, available from paa2013.princeton.edu/papers/132194, accessed December 13, 2014.

81. In seeking to do the right thing, international efforts are all too often counterproductive. They often have polarizing impacts through cultural insensitivity. They often overwhelm local capacities such as wharf space, airports, hospitals, and key real-estate, driving inflation and creating winners and losers among the local populous. This, in turn, increases illegal markets such as trafficking, prostitutes, and underpaid or slave laborers; undermines stability; and creates an incentive for some to extend the crisis so that they can continue to profit from it or agitate for constitutional change.

82. D. Harrison McKnight and Norman L. Chervany, *Trust and Distrust Definitions: One Bite at a Time*, East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, undated, p. 47, available from <https://www.msu.edu/~mcknig26/Trust%20and%20Distrust%20Definitions.pdf>, accessed December 12, 2014.

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85. Robert A. Manning, "Beware the Great Clash in Asia: China vs. America is Getting Dangerous," *The National Interest*, July 30, 2014, available from nationalinterest.org/feature/beware-the-great-clash-asia-china-vs-america-getting-10977, accessed October 22, 2014.

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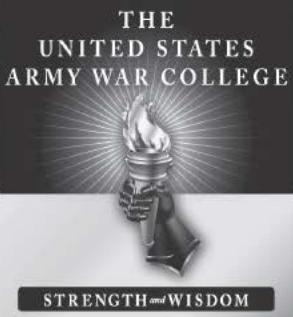
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